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Chicana Political Visionaries: A Review of Political Art, Cultural Resistance and Chicana Aesthetics

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Chicana Political Visionaries: A Review of Political Art, Cultural Resistance and Chicana Aesthetics

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Dedication

I dedicate this report to my loving husband Josh Inman. He has been my rock of support. I could not have accomplished this without him.

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Abstract

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This paper presents a literature review on Chicana artists throughout history. It is an effort to situate Chicana artists as political visionaries, capable of conveying new visions for the future in their strategic disruption of the distribution of the sensible. Chicana art has been widely studied in the past two decades as a body of work that is both based in cultural formation, spirituality and a feminist critique of the Chicano Movement from 1968-1975. In this review of the literature, I will explore Chicana art in its role as political inspiration and a mapping of resistance to white elite power structures. Therefore, my focus in this work will be to analyze resistance and visual art, as well as the relationship between Chicanas and visual art. In this sample, I will canvas some of the work written on the historical processes that shaped Chicana/o identity, the Chicano/a movement and the early Chicana critique of that movement. This will simultaneously incorporate references to the artistic expression of the movement that has continued to shape cultural and political production in the Mexican American and affiliated academic communities for the last forty years.

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Introduction: (Re)Making Space for a Different Future

"The painter who paints a subversive
Is also a subversive.
In her portrait of him, she imagines
His long black twist of hair. In her portraits
Of herself, she wears a mask
Or has no mouth…"
- Martin Espada, "The Lover of a Subversive is Also a Subversive"[1]

"I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become. The word, the image and the feeling have a palpable energy, a kind of power." – Gloria Anzaldua (2007, 93)

The marginalized subject in anthropology has been treated with varying degrees of agency in our colonial and post-colonial society. From the mid-1970s the Foucaultian concept of the omnipotent and self-subjugating biopower, to Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics, agency has been limited to the margins in most of this body of work. Despite these overarching themes, Michel Foucault did concede in his January 7th, 1976 lecture that there are anti-sciences, *genealogies* that "are about the insurrection of knowledges (Foucault 2003, 9)." These knowledges are in direct contrast to biopower, which has defined supra and sub-races[2] in its continual effort to normalize and control society. Biopower, or the state and scientific community's efforts to control various "populations" through statistical data, legislation, and deployment of particular modalities maintaining life or neglecting it, works within the realm of normalized subjects. Those that are at the margins of the "normal" are often viewed as inassimilable, incapable of being "normalized" into controllable subjects via biopower, and therefore marginal subjects must be disciplined or allowed to die through neoliberal practices. Finally, if this does not destroy the threat, the power of the sovereign is used, which implies war against those that are in the defined "subrace": the deviant, subversive, or "outsiders".

In this context, I would like to assert that art created by these perceived Foucaultian subraces

[1] Espada, Martin. 2003. City of Coughing and Dead Radiators. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. p. 21.
[2] "In other words, what we see as a polarity, as a binary rift within society, is not a clash between two distinct races. It is the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace." Michel Foucault(2003) Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976. New York: Picador. p. 61. Foucault did not refer to "race" and "subrace" as it is commonly understood in its biological sense. Instead, these were theoretical concepts deployed to understand two groups separated by a "historic-political divide" through "acts of violence (2003:77)." The supra-race is made up of normalized subjects, while the sub-race is made up of the marginalized.

always contains this deviant element and frequently openly defies biopower and its race war. This defiance is more paradigm-shattering than Mbembe's "laughter"[3] because it doesn't merely "flip" colonial or post-colonial *commandments*[4] on their heads, but uses resurgent genealogies to simultaneously question present stigmas and imagine different futures. These arts are not passive, but can instead be used as a tool to create a "new middle", or *Nepantla*. *Nepantla* is a concept I will develop further on in this piece.

Specifically, I will be using Chicana art[5] to explore the relationship between visual depictions of other worlds interact with histories of resistance to oppression. In this way, I want to situate Chicana art as not only spiritual, but inherently political. Therefore, in Chapter 1, I will develop the significance of art as a cultural expression in society in theoretical pieces, as well as how Chicana artists perceive it. In Chapter 2, I will draw out the long history of repression, colonialism, sexism, and homophobia that have shaped the Chicana identity. This history will focus on Mexican American women's culture to provide the social and political context for the common themes and iconography found in their art. This will be situated in the important context of the Chicano/a political movement, where it emerged. Finally, Chapter 3 examines Chicana art production as a measure of critique within the movement and the society overall. Analysis of many pieces will expand on how Chicana artists infuse their own identification with the crossroads into an

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[3] "And, by laughing, it drains officialdom of meaning and sometimes obliges it to function while empty and powerless. Thus we may assert that, by dancing publicly for the benefit of power, the 'postcolonized subject' is providing his or her loyalty, and by compromising with the corrupting control that state power tends to exercise at all levels of everyday life, the subject is reaffirming that this power is incontestable - *precisely the better to play with and modify it whenever possible.*" - Achille Mbembe, On the Postcolony. University of California Press: Los Angeles, CA. 2001 p. 129.

[4] Or the "very specific *imaginary* of state sovereignty…it then crystallized, through a gradual accumulation of numerous acts and rituals – in short, played so important a role in everyday life that it ended up constituting the central cultural *imaginary* that the state shared with society, and thus had an authenticating and reiterating function (Mbembe 2001, 25)".

[5] I would postulate that Chicanas can still claim to be in a post-colonial state. According to Robert Blauner, "Although the migration of individuals and families in search of work and better living conditions has been largely voluntary, classifying this process as immigration misses the point that the Southwest is historically and culturally a Mexican, Spanish-speaking region. Moreover, from the perspective of conquest that many Mexicans have retained, the movement has been to land that is still seen as their own." *Colonized and Immigrant Minorities*. In Takaki, Ronald. 1987. From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America. Oxford University Press: New York. p.151.

effort at political bridging. I analyze concepts like *Nepantla* and *domesticana*, a particular aesthetic medium, as well as where Chicana artists' work is potentially going in the 21st century. Overall, I intend to demonstrate that this "new middle" art is a center of resistance that is continually displacing itself as a means of survival against the violence of colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalism in Western nodes of power. It is in their method of continual displacement that these artists are political visionaries capable of reaching beyond the margins.

Chapter 1: Resistance and Visual Art

Defining the Visual Arts

"Revolution is not only won by numbers, but by visionaries, and if artists aren't visionaries, then we have no business doing what we do." - Cherie Moraga (Perez 2007, 34)

My research grapples with Chicana visual art in the context of its historical development out of a political movement and why art's role was so significant in the activism and politics of the community. I focus my sights on self-identifying Chicana artists in particular, since they position themselves as political visionaries in a liminal space of hybridity. To explain my choice of those who "self identify" as Chicana, I have found that many theorists use Chicano and Chicana interchangeably with Mexican-American (Diaz-Cotto 2006; Maciel & Ortiz 1996; Vigil 2007), but there is little evidence that Chicana/o is still a prevalent form of self classification within the Mexican American community (Perez 2007; Rodriguez 2007). Instead, it is an identity that is specifically political, taking its heritage and content from the Chicano/a movement itself. From the literature, I found myself looking for the ways that visual arts are defined by both anthropologists and broader theorists. However, given art's multiple meanings, mediums and valences, I intend to start with Chicana artists' interpretation of what art is and its purpose. I am primarily interested in their visual art, but I use much of their writing on both their own works and others to expound further on their aesthetic definitions. Then I intend to demonstrate how some scholars have complimented or contradicted these definitions. Also, in fleshing out various theories of what art is and how it operates, we may see openings for how Chicana artists work can instigate political visions in its viewers.

Famous Chicana visual artists Amalia Mesa-Bains posited that "art production can be seen

not as reflection of ideology but as a vehicle by which ideologies are constructed…[it] becomes a social reality, through which particular worldviews and identities can be lived, can be constructed, even reproduced , redefined and redistributed (Mesa-Bains 2003, 305)." Therefore, for Chicana artists, what defines art is that it is produced with transformative properties, which play on both the artist and the viewer. Chicana artists place themselves in the Nahuatl heritage of the *tlamatini*, who were artists that were trained in ancient Mesoamerican glyph-making and the knowledge that was encoded in those pictograms. Therefore, they had an important role in their communities as teachers and healers that were "mediating the spiritual growth and well-being of the beholder (Perez 2007, 28)." Therefore, Chicana artists view art as being something that is both decipherable, and a link between the past, present and future of a community. Gloria Anzaldua, another famous Chicana artist and writer, explains that she sees her 'performances' "not as inert and 'dead' objects (as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works)…[but] instead, the work has an identity; it is a 'who' or a 'what' and contains the presences of persons, that is…the work manifests the same needs as a person, it needs to be 'fed' (Anzaldua 2007, 89)." Chicana artists often embody their art as living, having the capacity to create its own effects in the world beyond its creator. Another famous Chicana artist Santa Barraza further explains her art as a manifestation of art critic bell hook's images by which 'subjugated knowledge speaks-remakes history,' in that her "empowered images intervene and speak…much as a shaman retrieves a lost soul, in order to make whole and complete a person suffering from disorientation; these images then transform themselves and communicate in a new and profound manner…[that] then becomes a reality (Barraza 2001, 49)."

In their groundbreaking work Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith and Identity, Rodriguez and Fortier argue that art, in all its expressions and mediums, generates out of culture. Culture is "a social construct that is usually understood in and through the contents of its traditions – its feelings, modes of action, forms of language, aspirations, interpersonal relations, images, ideas, and ideals

(Rodriguez & Fortier 2007:8)." In contrast to this analysis, early 20th century anthropologists have differentiated visual art as a specific type of "ethnic" material culture, even as all material culture is ephemeral and contextualized to a particular time and place (Boas 1955; Haselberger 1961; Hatcher 1999; Wolfe 1969). Material culture has been understood as the body of material available for "the study of the values and beliefs of a particular community or society at a given time (Prown 1982, 1)." While Boas seems to recognize the importance of the aesthetic in his definition of art as a technical form in its perfect standard, it is difficult to know when this perfection is achieved (Boas 1955). Haselberger endeavors to clarify this vague definition by stating that art is distinguished from purely utilitarian objects "by the aesthetic intention and…by the striving for effect (1961, 324)." Since the focus of anthropology for many decades remained on supposed "lower" forms of artistic expression, following the logic of the Western imperialist epistemology of the time, addressing why some 'art' forms were prevalent in particular cultures versus others became necessary. Alvin Wolfe determined that societies with social structural features that set up unequal divisions of labor are where high production of art tended to take place. He concluded that "the emotions involved in the art are related to the emotions associated with the social barriers in local communities (Wolfe 1969, 4)." His definition places high amounts of visual art in societies that are complex enough to have divisions of labor and social roles in which tensions and emotions erupt in a creative manner.

Chicana artists have argued that these "ethnic art" views are typical of Western ethnocentrism, which is "the tyranny of Western aesthetics,…an Indian mask in an American museum is transposed into an alien aesthetic system where what is missing is the presence of power invoked through performance ritual,…it has become a conquered thing, a dead 'thing' separated from nature and, therefore, its power (Anzaldua 2007, 90)." By de-contextualizing "ethnic" art, early anthropologists attempted to theorize about it while simultaneously epistemologically

colonizing it and stripping it of its meaning. Chicana artists also contend that due to this period of collecting and analyzing "ethnic" art, Western "painters have 'borrowed,' copied, or otherwise extrapolated the art of tribal cultures and called it cubism, surrealism, symbolism (Anzaldua 2007, 90)." Therefore, this method of debasing "ethnic art" was also a means for Western artists to take stimulation from it without giving citing their inspirational sources. Although much of the art was successfully removed from its place of meaning throughout the 20th century, over time colonizer and colonized have lived side by side, affecting each others' systems of meaning. This has not only re-informed Chicana art, but it had re-contextualized their art amongst viewers in the process (Barraza 2001).

Scholars beyond the field of anthropology have made major inroads into the definition of art, one that could incorporate the wide variety of forms and styles seen in cultures all over the world. Some of this work can be useful in conjunction with Chicana artists' definition of their own work today. Leon Trotsky, a well known theorist, posited that "art, as a distinctive form of culture understood most broadly as the 'sum of knowledge and capacity that characterizes the entire society,' at once follows and completes a society's response to the 'elementary problems' of human need, production, and distribution (Trotsky and Keach 2005, 11)." Therefore, art is always addressing a need or solution to a problem generating out of society in general, or the individual experiences of those predicaments. He further explicates that new artistic forms are born in reply to new needs and contradictions developing out of the social order (Trotsky and Keach 2005). Art, of all mediums and practices, is a conscious attempt at reflecting on the creative process that humans consistently demonstrate in their daily lives. This works well with Chicana artists who utilize their memory/history as a means to overcome current problems in their community. As Chicana artist Cherie Moraga explains at the end of her "Codex Xeri" exhibition catalogue, "the Chicano scribe remembers, not out of nostalgia but out of hope,…she remembers in order to envision,…she looks

backward in order to look forward to a world founded not on greed, but on respect for the sovereignty of nature (Moraga 1993, 190-191)." For Chicana artists, pulling from memory is a not an effort to reinvent the past, but instead reinterpret the future, addressing current problems in society.

Elaine Scarry, in The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World, defines art as a "very, very small group of objects that are overtly *unreal*." These "poems, films, paintings, sonatas are framed by their fictionality: their made-upness surrounds them and remains available to us on an ongoing basis," while we tend to forget other things, such as the material item of basic use-value, is originally imagined before it is created. Therefore, art objects "exist both to celebrate and help us to understand the nature of creating (Scarry 1985, 314)." Scarry's point that art reminds us of the ability of human to create could either obscure art into the *unreal*[6], or work the opposite angle of reminding us that all humans put a hand into creating the world that we live in. This includes the world in our minds, the world we can physically touch, and everything in between. Therefore, if human beings ultimately make the world, they can change it (Scarry 1985). Chicana artists would drastically diverge from Scarry's concept of art as the *unreal*, because they posit their work is living and breathing, imbued with the power of life. For them, humans make their world in combination with nature, not in separation from or domination over it. They would accept that art is a celebration of human creation, but interpret the art as both a creation/creator in the world.

John Berger, in Ways of Seeing, argues that it is the art critic's prescribed duty under Western capitalist society to mystify art in order to relegate it to the *unreal* and confuse its historical meaning in the present context. While art always contains the element of the *unreal*, it

[6] Scarry uses the term *unreal* in reference to human psychological definitions of their reality and what is included and what is not. *Unreal* is the category of things that emanate from the imagination but are not accepted as part of our daily material reality.

simultaneously encompasses the ability to reflect on the world concurrently maintaining its celebration of human artifice (Berger 1977). In his analysis of ways that we psychologically see objects and differentiate them from ourselves, Berger enables us to expressly begin defining visual art in the context of Western "modern" art of the Renaissance. Visual art is the aesthetic medium that holds significant meaning based on its ability to be differentiated from ourselves, or externalized, while being internalized in terms of the symbolic content it conveys. Jacques Ranciere widens the definition of visual art further, instead referring to aesthetics as the *distribution of the sensible*, delineated as what existing configuration of life is visible and can affect "a mode of articulation between forms of action, production, perception and thought (Ranciere 2006, 82)." This opens space to understand political art, as it extends aesthetics past the firm realm of the formal Western institutional definition of "The Arts" to incorporate modes of visibility operative in the political domain (Ranciere 2006). Chicana artists have already been using the political domain in their activism within their communities and their use of icons that are deeply politicized, which I will elaborate more on in other sections.

These theorists, among others outside of anthropology, have also created a critical discourse inside the discipline about how to conceive of art produced by a member of a particular culture without placing it in the *savage slot* of "ethnic art" (Trouillot 1991). The ongoing debate within Visual Anthropology and the wider field is exhibited by the dynamic ways art and anthropology are approached in the work of Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright. In their edited book Contemporary Art and Anthropology, they bridge connections between the practices of artists and those of anthropologists, arguing that "whilst this suggesting border crossings of any kind has provoked hostility on both sides, reflecting the anxiety of interdisciplinarity, …[it] is perhaps a product of the often blurred nature of the borders (Schneider and Wright 2006, 3)." They still integrate anthropologist writings on various artists, while incorporating interviews with artists that are

employing their own styles of ethnography today. This interesting development in the art world of "ethnographic practice" quite intentionally muddies the definition of art in relation to the "science" of anthropology. In this way it prolongs the debate about whether ethnographies can in fact be considered scientific work, emerging out of the "Writing Culture" debate in anthropology during the 1980s (Schneider and Wright 2006). For Chicana artists, investing their work with meaning that is produced by and in conversation with their community is common practice, an "insider" ethnography of sorts.

While these scholars diverge on the definition of the visual arts in interesting ways, the recurring theme of these works locates visual arts as a form of human production with the intention of an aesthetic effect in the context of a larger symbolic, cultural and economic system. Art within these parameters cannot just be understood in its material manifestation, but also in the creative process itself. In this process of creation and in the subsequent practice of art being viewed by others, Chicana artists have posited their art as political, or having an effect of translating a political message that encourages a type of activity of the part of the spectator. As Mesa-Bains explicitly states, "art becomes social imagination through which essential worldviews and identities are constructed, reproduced and even redefined…[it] becomes an instrument of redefinition in a politicizing spirituality (Mesa-Bains 1993, 9)." Their art is living in its conversation with viewers, refashioning their worldview and infusing them with political awareness.

Political Art and Cultural Resistance

The working definition of political art in this piece is "art" created with the intention to disrupt a viewer's distribution of the sensible, along with the goal that it may lead to a particular type of action on the artist's behalf. First, it is important to analyze the artist's creation process itself. For Scarry, in any making of an object, there are three simultaneous developments

happening: projection; the made-locus as a "lever", or midpoint; and the action of reciprocation. She explains that "the solitary artifact has been described here as a 'lever' because it is only the midpoint in the total arc of action, and the second half of that arcing action is vastly in excess of the first half [and]…it is this total, self-amplifying arc of action, rather than the discrete object, that the human maker makes: the made object is simply the made-locus across which the power of creation is magnified and redirected back onto its human agents who are now caught up in the cascade of self-revision they have themselves authored (Scarry 1985, 323)." Thus, in order for us to understand how art "is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it"[7], we must briefly engage these three moments in its production. Scarry only attempts to elaborate on the first two of these three.

Projection, or the act of imagining and then materially creating, is a means for humans to project their most intimate pain into the unfeeling environment and also to demonstrate human compassion by attempting to extend human sentience. However, the energy expended by the human to create is generally less of an effort than the reward of the reciprocation that individual will receive from this exertion (Scarry1985). Interestingly, artist Gloria Anzaldua describes the projection process in creating art as "a cactus needle embedded in my flesh."

> It worries itself deeper and deeper, and I keep aggravating it by poking at it. When it begins to fester I have to do something to put an end to the aggravation and to figure out why I have it….Then it comes out. No more discomfort, no more ambivalence. Until another needle pierces the skin. That's what writing is for me, an endless cycle of making it worse, making it better, but always making meaning out of the experience, whatever it may be. (Anzaldua 2007, 95)

This creative process is often metaphorically referred to as "giving birth," and while it momentarily releases the artist's pain from mind and/or gut, it does not necessarily take the expression of human compassion. It may, in fact, be the closest example to the intimate

[7] Quoted from Bertolt Brecht, famous German playwright (1898-1956).

demonstration of human pain: physical, mental and/or emotional. Anzaldua explains this creative moment is inspired by *la Coatlicue*, the Aztec goddess "Serpent Skirt". I will expound on *la Coatlicue's* significance in relation to Nepantla in a later section. For now, let it suffice to say that the projection process alone contains an internalizing/externalizing element to it, in which the artist is reshaped as is the piece of artwork. On the first side of the creative process, art proves incapable of being passive.

However, the reception of the creative process on behalf of the viewer is somewhat unknown, which is the point of reciprocation. Ranciere contends that assuming the spectator is a passive receptacle for a political message is a false notion. Here he argues against Brecht and other political artists, accusing them of attempting a pedagogical tyranny over their viewers. Instead, all viewers actively view art and compare it with their previous experiences and knowledge base (Ranciere 2009). Luckily, every society has its own distribution of the sensible, and this is where artists with a political message have an advantage. They can position particular symbols in their work in such a fashion as to "transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations (Ranciere 2006, 63)." Therefore, using symbols out of the context of their original meaning, they become refashioned to disrupt that meaning and can effectively refashion a viewer's worldview.

It is fair to maintain many people with different paradigms may view a piece of visual artwork in varying lights, and may not be greatly impacted by it, or may choose not to engage it at all. Chicana artists do disrupt the distribution of the sensible in their work, but they also reinforce certain existing forms of political unconscious within their own community (Olguin 1997; Rodriguez and Fortier 2007). The Chicana artist, one that has positioned herself at the edges of larger society, tends to direct her art towards a particular audience: the historically

marginalized of Mexican descent in the United States. Following in the tradition of the Chicano/a movement, Chicana artists strive to make their artwork accessible to their communities, *barrios*, and people by positioning their work in public spaces in close proximity to their intended viewers. Not only does the Chicana artist make many moves to make her art available physically to certain marginalized audiences, but she tends to use symbols that have a strong degree of overlap with the people in those audiences.

Pierre Bourdieu remarks on how the sharing of extremely similarity experiences can create, at least in particular time-space continuums, a collective and/or shared *habitus*: or a system of durable and transposable dispositions (Bourdieu 2007). As a Chicana artist, Gloria Anzaldua describes this shared system of meaning amongst the marginalized as *la facultad*. She goes on to describe those with *la facultad* as:

> Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity). Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest – the females, the homosexuals of all races, the dark-skinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign." (Anzaldua 2007, 60)

Therefore, it is safe to say that if one can determine that a person is indeed a "viewer" of a piece and be able to determine their positionality in reference to the Chicana artist's desired audience, there may be a way to untangle some of this seeing/being activity. Berger points out that one's position in relation to the art piece, and one's choice to view it, determines heavily what one takes away from it. This act of "seeing which comes before words, and can never be quite covered by them, is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli…[t]o look is an act of choice…[w]e never look at just one thing; we are moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are." (Berger 1977, 9) What Scarry misses from her amazing demonstration of human projection and making is an analysis of position and power in an

unequal society. One main manifestation of unequal power over history has been the formation of ethnic groups.

Ethnicity is the "residue of societal processes that may have taken generations to evolve" which is reflected in "a set of activities, traits, customs, rituals, relationships and other emblems of signification that are rooted in group histories and shared to differing degrees by the members of a given national/ethnic group (Goldman 1990, 269)." Thus, ethnic formations are not initially created from some sort of biological differentiation, but through the very cultural production that humans engage in daily involving interest groups that form, over many years, particular traits and activities that are specific to their group and its maintenance. Although many times these ethnicities are expressed in political representations such as the nation state, just as often they are manifested within a state that has a much more dominant ethnic group. Often the very hierarchies and unequal power/economic distributions are central in the historical formations of ethnic groups (Hodder 1979). Over time, ethnic groups that continue for various reasons to interact with one another, draw from similar experiences to create their own culture.

Rodriguez and Fortier contend that those who have been historically marginalized over time form a collective memory, composed of many personal interpretations of memory, that are passed down in the community. They explain that cultural memory "is the process by which a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving, with the help of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to *reconstruct* their cultural identity (Rodriguez and Fortier 2007, 1)." This tool is used by historically oppressed cultures to fight for survival in the face of structural and ideological opposition. Therefore, the research in "collective memory and historical identity recognizes that critical to the retaining of one's cultural identity, and assuming survival, are language, religious practices, and the maintenance

of the principles regarding everyday life (Rodriguez and Fortier 2007, 4)." This cultural memory is used as a survival mechanism for historically disadvantaged groups, and poses itself as a form of resistance. Chicana artists Amalia Mesa-Bains expounds that it "is through memory that we construct the bridge between the past and the present, the old and the new,…this redemptive memory claims a broken reality that is made whole in the retelling [and] in this context, contemporary art is more than a mirror of history and belief, it is a construction of ideology (Mesa-Bains 1993, 9)." This resistance becomes entrenched in much of the symbolism, including symbolic images, created and utilized by those groups. For example, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe amongst Chicana/os and other groups of Mexican descent holds many Nahuatl and pre-Colombian attributes that affirm Indian dignity and restoration of self in the face of Spanish conquest and current US racial inequality (Rodriguez 1994; Rodriguez and Fortier 2007). Guadalupe will be expounded on in a later chapter.

Goldman argues that Chicano culture in the United States has been characterized by three manifestations: "that of cultural resistance…; cultural maintenance, which includes all aspects of ethnicity; and cultural affirmation, which celebrates race, ethnicity, and class (Goldman 1990, 173)." Chicano/a culture appears to correspond with previous evidence of cultural production in response to economic or societal tension. Chicana art is part of the material culture developed within the self-defined Chicana population in response to a historical process of colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression. It reflects all of these manifestations and has been used in the political movements of the past and present for cultural, political and economic change in response to the dominant American culture. Famous anthropologist Eric Wolf explains this resistance in terms of hegemony and counter-hegemony, arguing that "modes of mobilizing social labor are…a vectoral force to the formation and propagation of ideas (Wolf 1984, 398)." Hegemonic ideas are those that are accepted within an overall culture without any second thought, and are usually a

"displacement…of the real contradiction underlying each mode" by means of an imaginary screen of symbolic thought, which creates an imaginary universe. Counter-hegemonic ideas develop both in response to hegemonic ideas, but they also can pull from different paradigms inherent to cultural memory. The Chicano/a political movement has had a long rich memory to pull its powerful icons and symbols of resistance from.

Chapter 2: Chicanas Defined

The Roots of Resistance: Race, Gender and National Inequality

In this chapter, I focus on the history of Mexican Americans, with a specific focus on women and their roles throughout. That way I can more effectively expound on Chicana artists imagery and use of symbols in relation to their historical memory. This context allows us to better understand the significance and relevance of their iconography, which further elucidates the arts' political character.

Aztlán and Returning

Alurista, the famous Chicano poet, first introduced the idea of Aztlán, a land that the Chichimecs had supposedly traveled from to the current area of Mexico City over five hundred years before the Aztec Empire was established. This was a source of inspiration to the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s, building on a powerful identity that was no longer associated with the oppressions that Mexican Americans and the Chicano generation had experienced (Mariscal 2005; Muñoz 2007). Many scholars demonstrated a lot of archaeological evidence for migrations from the American Southwest to Tenochtitlan, what is today Mexico City. However, Alurista posited that Mexican Americans in the current U.S. Southwest had merely returned to Aztlán, where scholars have proven that instead the Californios, Hispanos and Tejanos of today most likely are related to Spanish Mexicans who returned to the American Southwest as dominated Spanish subjects that willingly or unwillingly participated in conquering the area for the Spanish crown (Menchaca 2001). This process included conquering Indian peoples, Christianizing them, and establishing Christian missions, pueblos and rancherías (Menchaca 2001; Rodriguez 2007).

In order to understand what oral traditions refer to as a 'tale', oral history passed down over five hundred years which still retains some kernel of accuracy and a high degree of cultural importance (Vansina 1985), this story of Aztlán must be the beginning of explaining Chicano roots.

However, it must be coupled with the history of Spanish conquest, forced migrations, mass annihilations of Indian populations, the Mexican period, and Anglo conquest and racialization through law and state/vigilante violence. In order to address Chicana identity specifically, scholarship on women of Indian, mestizo and afromestizo descent throughout these historical periods reveal how they were transformed into sexual subjects of color. Finally, given the racial order in the United States today, the Chicana/o identity is always in dialogue with new waves of immigrants from Mexico, and therefore major flows in Mexican immigration to the US will be addressed.

It is unknown to archaeologists and scholars where exactly Aztlán physically existed, but there is a high likelihood that it was originally in the current day U.S. Southwest. Native American groups have been documented to be in North America for over 30,000 years (Fagan 1991). They most likely traversed the Bering Strait landmass from Asia into current day Alaska. Settlements up and down the coast of the Pacific Ocean appeared shortly thereafter, with humans spreading out across the continent and further south. Archaeologists have found that Mexican sites indicate that agricultural methods were discovered and shared around 5000 B.C. After 2000 years, these techniques were being used widely in what today is the US Southwest, leading to a more sedentary lifestyle. While the great civilizations of the Olmecs and Mayans were rising and falling in southern Mesoamerica, other less hierarchical and smaller human groupings coexisted with them throughout Mesoamerica, and especially in the Southwest. In the Southwest, by 200 B.C. to 300 B.C., the Hohokam people migrated from present Sonora, Mexico to settle in southern Arizona. A century later, the Mogollon people settled north of them in Arizona and northern New Mexico. A few centuries later, the Anasazi migrated to the Southwest and established themselves north of the Mogollon people (Menchaca 2001).

The Anasazi culture began to dominate in the region after a few centuries, and led to larger urban centers of population sizes between 200 and 2,000 people. Sometime between A.D. 1100 and A.D. 1450, the Hohokam and Anasazi-Mogollon cultural complexes began to break into smaller ethnic divisions and people. Most historic peoples left little trace behind in Texas, but in California, New Mexico and Arizona, many clear sites have been discovered. California has had the most amount of site finds, which may indicate it was the most settled in the Southwest. Other groups that were prominent in this area were the Chumash Indians, which appeared to settle much of California. Other groups that lived in current day California were the Shoshone and Penutian among others (Menchaca 2001).

North of the borders of Mesoamerica, most of the land was labeled the Gran Chichimec where thousands of groups lived. Scholars point to these people as being the possible ancestors from Aztlán, along a five hundred year migration. Most of these groups fell under the label Chichimec and archaeologists found most of their earliest cultural complexes in current Durango and Zacatecas. Around A.D. 950, these sites drastically declined, which is attributed to out migration in a general southward direction. As these sites decrease, Chichimec suddenly appear in the Valley of Mexico, settling a couple miles north of Teotihuacán. At this point, they are distinguished as the Toltec-Chichimec, and established the great city of Tula, which was later abandoned after a century. Some people migrated northward out of Tula, but many others continued southward and landed on the Yucatán Peninsula, conquering a group of Mayans. Although these connections are still highly contested by archaeologists, what is clear is that a Chichimec group by the name of the Mexica migrated south and settled in the Valley of Mexico around A.D. 1111 (Menchaca 2001).

The Mexica were known as warriors with amazing military efficiency, and began to marry

into royal families of the Valley. They eventually broke social customs and good relations with many other groups in the Valley, but also became one of the most feared people in the region. They were initially isolated, but built up their armies and by A.D. 1430, had built powerful alliances with the kingdoms of Texcoco and Tlacopan. With this triumvirate, they conquered the entire Valley and established the confederate of states that became known as the Aztec Empire. Some scholars argue that the oral tradition around Aztlán was created so the Mexica could remove the stigma of their modest origins (Gillespie 1989), but other scholars indicate that the tale has real archaeological evidence to back it up. Similar architectural styles from earlier Zacatecas and Durango sites have been linked with subsequent Tula and later Aztec structures consistent with the spread of the Toltec-Chichimec and Mexica people (Evans 2006). Fact or fiction, the tale holds powerful significance for the Chicano/a identity (Menchaca 2001).

The Spanish Empire and the Casta System

The great Aztec Empire flourished for close to one hundred years by the time the Spanish conquistadors arrived. The Spanish crown had sent many voyages to the New World in search of wealth, colonies and cheap labor. From Cuba, the first sea explorations were initiated towards modern day Mexico, with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba reaching the Yucatan Peninsula in A.D. 1517. Two years later, Hernán Cortés was sent to explore Mexico further. Equipped with ships, horses and little over five hundred men, Cortés began a horrendous burning, albeit meandering, trail through Mesoamerica. After utilizing alliances, scare tactics from horses and European weaponry, divide-and-conquer tactics, and disease, the conquistadors arrived at the Aztec Empire's steps in August of 1521. They did not arrive alone, but had convinced Tlaxcalan Indians, often at odds with the Aztec Empire, to send somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 troops (Del Castillo 1963; Menchaca 2001; Sherman and Meyer 1999). After subjugating the Aztec Empire through many battles, the Spanish initially maintained dominance by allowing local leaders and nobility to

maintain their posts, as long as their allegiance remained with the Crown. Leaders that rebelled were promptly replaced by those immediately below them in the various hierarchies of Mesoamerica. Within fifty years of the initial conquest, the Spanish had set up an elaborate racial classification system known as *La Casta.*

The Casta system was built on the premise that white Spaniards were given the highest amount of privilege and prestige, followed by subsequent categories of people of color. The Spanish had brought slaves from West Africa that were primarily known as the Malinké with them to the New World to take part in the conquest and then as a cheap source of labor. Indians of Mesoamerica were also fair game, often enslaved or massacred in the pursuit of land and wealth. The Casta System had many complex categories, but the main racial castes broke down into *peninsulares, criollos, mestizos, afromestizos* and *Indians.* Slaves from Mali were not free, and therefore not included in the racial caste system. Peninsulares were white Spanish people born in Spain, and were given the highest positions in the government and largest land titles due to the perception that they were most loyal to the Crown. *Criollos* were white Spanish people born in what was consecrated as New Spain, and held the next highest positions in the government and Catholic Church. *Mestizo* people were those with both Indian and Spanish blood, who were usually left with no rights to land and often worked in trades, selling their labor for subsistence. *Afromestizos* were those with African, Spanish and Indian blood, who usually had a similar position to mestizos with more restrictions when it came to movement, dress and the ability to arm themselves. Finally, full blooded *Indians* were often the lowest in the new racial order, but occasionally had advantages of protected land if the Catholic Church had chosen to step in and protect it (Bonfil Batalla 1996).

The Catholic Church was often at odds with the New Spain government and the hacienda

owners, who were granted landed estates that were "furnished" with Indian laborers who had happened to live there before the region was conquered (Menchaca 2001; Wolf 1982). Hacienda owners and the agricultural elite were often interested in enslaving as many Indians as possible, while the Catholic Church finally established that Indians did have souls which could be "Christianized," and therefore they should not be enslaved and their land should be protected. This was most heavily elaborated in Vitoria's Natural Laws, which stipulated that Indians could not be enslaved and were to be extended legal rights, as long as they did not rebel against the Crown. Those that resisted the arm of Spanish Empire were viewed as fair game for exploitation. They also pressured *peninsulares* and *criollos* of status to marry their Indian concubines, which the Crown agreed was a means to further pacify the population. This great intermarriage would significantly affect the later racial composition of New Spain. Finally, the Catholic Church made many efforts to end slavery in the colony, but with only partial success. While shipments of enslaved Malinké started slowly and became quite intense during the epidemics in central Mexico, it had begun to fall off by the mid 17th century. Through a series of laws, eventually it was determined that children of enslaved black men and free Indian women would be free as long as they resided with the mother's community. However, enslaved black women's children would always become slaves. While this did lead many enslaved black men to choose Indian women as partners, it did not end slavery in New Spain. It did, however, contribute to the further racial mixture of the Mesoamerican population and create a free afromestizo population (Menchaca 2001; 2007).

The casta system became more complicated as the Spanish furthered their conquest to the North and to the South. For the scope of this review, the focus will be on the Spanish's ongoing efforts to conquer the Gran Chichimeca to the north, along with the US Southwest. The Gran Chichimeca was said to contain huge gold and silver mines, which the Spanish Crown greatly coveted (Menchaca 2001; Wolf 1982). The terrain, however, was also much more difficult, and the

people that lived there were often impossible to conquer due to their great skills as warriors and military experts. In 1546, silver mines were confirmed in the area by Spanish explorers, and the campaigns to begin mining and settling the Gran Chichimec began. Many battles ensued, and by 1561 the Chichimecs had killed over 200 Spaniards and *mestizos*, along with over 2,000 Indian colonists. However, a few years later the Crown authorized a campaign called "*guerra a fuego y a sangre*." This war by blood and the sword meant that colonists had the right to kill and enslave any population in the Gran Chichimec that resisted them. The idea was to promote factionalism and divisions amongst Indians that resisted and those facing 13 years of enslavement in the mines, and it proved over time to be quite successful. To prevent further war campaigns, the Church proposed that instead Christian missions should be established near friendly Indian villages throughout the North. King Phillip II of Spain ordered a reduction of armed forces in the area and the implementation of the mission system. While another tool of colonization, the Church viewed the mission system as a more humane means of conquest. Regardless, many colonists continued to illegally capture and enslave Indian people of the Chichimec (Menchaca 2001; Rodriguez 2007).

The settlement of the Southwest began shortly after the Gran Chichimec region was perceived as colonized. Explorations had occurred since the 1530s when Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, Arizona New Mexico, and California were mapped, but no land movements were initiated until the fall of the Gran Chichimeca in the 1590s. California was explored but not settled at the time. New Mexico was the first region to be colonized in 1598, followed by Arizona and Texas in the early 1690s, and finally California in 1769. While the conquest of the US Southwest was slow, scattered, and often unsuccessful, it is informative in terms of the racial composition of these new colonial outposts. Due to the danger of the region, which was always under threat of Indian retaliatory attacks, few Peninsulares were interested in risking their lives and futures colonizing the area. In order to encourage conquests in the region, the Spanish Crown granted

colonists the title of *hidalgo libres*, which allowed all *hidalgos* to wear Spanish clothing, ride horses and carry arms in public regardless of their race. Many mestizos, afromestizos and criollos of questionable lineage saw conquering the Southwest as a means to break free from many aspects of the oppressive Casta system. These people of mixed racial background made up the majority of the colonists to help the Crown conquer the Southwest. At the same time, the Christian missions helped acculturate many Indians in the region and integrate them within Spanish society, while many groups, such as the Navajo, maintained their distance from Spanish outposts. Others directly resisted colonization, such as the Apache and Comanche. The Spanish conquest of the Southwest finally ended in 1821 when the Mexican people rebelled against the Spanish Empire and, ended their control over Mexican territory. Mexico and the Southwest came under a new political government that extended citizenship to all people regardless of race. A complex layering of colonization continued well into the mid 19th century (Bonfil Batalla 1996; Menchaca 2001; 2007).

The United States and Racialization: Land, Citizenship, and Segregation

The U.S. declared war on Mexico on May 11, 1846, and continued for a year and four months. The war was a colonial exercise by the United States to extend its territory and incorporate three quarters of Mexico's most valuable natural resources along with half of its land into American hands. The excuse that was given instead for the war was regarding a dispute over the annexed Texas territory. The U.S. government had annexed Texas in 1845, a few years after Texas Anglo immigrants had won the Texas War of Independence and successfully obtained independence from Mexico. When the U.S. annexed Texas as a state, it chose to also take additional land which had never belonged to Texas. This dispute culminated in the Mexican American War which finally ended on December 16th, 1847. Mexico was defeated promptly because it was still recovering from the massive theft of national resources that Spain exacted on their National Treasury upon its Independence in 1821. The US also had a very well trained and professional army, so most of the

fighting happened in the interior of Mexico, and not in the current Southwest. The US took over the capital of Mexico City to finalize the victory, and some US lawmakers considered taking all Mexican land. However, that would mean having to defend more borders and expand further than the US was capable of. Also, the Southwest had a very small population of people of color, while the interior of Mexico was highly populated. This would have changed the balance of the racial composition in the US in ways that many legislators were adverse to (Chacón and Davis 2006; Menchaca 2001; Rodriguez 2007).

They decided to take the Southwest territories that were sparsely populated, but they didn't want Southern Arizona, known as the Gila region. They knew it was Apache country and didn't want to deal with constant attacks, but later on they realized that it was one of the most valuable areas for moving people around the country, so they bought it from Mexico in 1854. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo brought closure to the war on February 2nd, 1848. In the treaty there were a lot of bi-national agreements over commerce, dealing with the Apache Indians, agreements over the mines, and reparations to both countries. The most important sections of the treaty were Article 8 and 9, which determined how Mexican citizens living in the new U.S. Southwest would be treated. The Treaty stated that Mexican citizens would be given U.S. citizenship if they chose to remain in the new U.S. territory and their land titles would be respected. Shortly after the Treaty was signed, U.S. federal, state and local governments began to violate it. The Mexican people in the region endured a new process of racialization, Anglo American style (Chacón and Davis 2006; Menchaca 2001; 2007; Rodriguez 2007).

The US racial order at the time of the Mexican American war conferred little to no rights on people of African or Indian descent. Many of the Mexican people living in the Southwest could not, under U.S. racial codes, be considered white and thus granted all the rights of white male citizens. Some of the rich Californios, Tejanos and Hispanos, who claimed pure Spanish ancestry were able

to retain their land titles and full voting rights. However, even many Mexican elites were challenged in court for their positions of prestige and their large land grants. Those with more meager resources were in even worse positions to defend their land titles and citizenship. Those that phenotypically appeared to be of African descent were automatically refused the right to vote and retain their land titles. Many Mexicans that claimed Spanish ancestry, but appeared to be of Indian or mixed descent either were stripped of their land by courts, or ended up selling their land to pay for all the legal fees to defend their grants in court. After Mexico gained its independence from Spain, it redistributed a lot of land in the Southwest, and distributed land titles to many of its citizens, irrespective of their race. However, at the closure of the Mexican American War many people had not yet received their land titles, while others who had grants had not had time to have their land surveyed and mapped. Many US states and courts required the title and survey to be presented, along with proof of one's white ancestry. Many Mexicans of color were stripped of their land and voting rights over the next twenty to thirty years. Most of this was decided by individual states, but even federal policies enforced these approaches. New Mexico, with one of the few Legislatures that attempted to maintain citizenship and land rights for most Mexican people in the area, was classified by the U.S. Federal Government as a territory and put under the supervision of the U.S. Land Board. These land boards promptly refused to acknowledge land titles held by the former Mexican citizens of New Mexico.

Indians were the most unfortunate of all groups during this time of racialization. Indians were not recognized to have any land rights because they were "savages" and "war-like" according to the ruling *U.S. vs. Macintosh, (1823*). Indians could only own property via U.S. Congressional treaty law, which generally led to Indians only owning reservation land. With the exception of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, the U.S. government refused to recognize the land titles of Indians regardless if the Mexican government had issued them a private or communal deed. Although most

Indians could not own property, the government gave each state the right to decide if Christianized Indians should be allowed to live among Anglos and Mexicans. This law gave Christianized Indians the opportunity to pass for Mexicans if they spoke Spanish and had acquired the traditions of Mexicans citizens. Unfortunately, nomadic Indians, or those who had not been conquered by Spain were either placed in reservations, forced to retreat to Mexico, or killed. In the case of Mexican mestizos, they were classified as U.S. citizens, but according to U.S. law, most did not qualify to vote or own land. By 1870, most Mexicans had lost their property, and most Indians with the exception of the Navajo and the Pueblo Indians, had been killed and lost their territory (Menchaca 1993; 1995; 2001; 2007).

Once many former Mexican citizens had lost their land and were afforded citizenship with little to no rights, they also became economically dependent on the whites that had usurped their land. Many had become forced to sell their labor to the new rich white land owners, in exchange for poor wages and social disrespect. After the first process of racialization was near completion, *de jure* segregation of Mexican people of color began. Segregation laws, according to *Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896)*, were specific to state and local governmental preference. Many laws between 1870 and the 1940 were passed in order to socially segregate Mexican people from whites in schools, neighborhoods, pools, theaters and other public spaces. A lot of social segregation was *de facto*, and most decisions were made on the local, county and city level. In Colorado and Texas, the State Supreme Courts ruled that dark-complected Mexicans could not swim in swimming pools with whites. In 1943, a study conducted by the InterAmerican Committee of U.S. Congress also found that the level of segregation in Texas was intense, and identified over one hundred towns that enacted dejure segregation laws (Kibbe 1946). The Mexican people in these towns were separated in different bathrooms, drinking fountains, sections of restaurants and theatres. Furthermore, in the 1930s, the majority of the Mexican population lived in Texas and California and a government study

indicated that school segregation was extensive. In 1930, 95% of schools in Texas were segregated and in California 85% of schools were also segregated (Hendrick 1977, 90; Rangel and Alcala 1972, 313-318). By 1935, the California state legislature stated that Mexicans who were Indian could be segregated.

Many Mexicans fought this segregation, and in cases like *Lopez vs. Seacomb (1944)* they were able to win because their attorney's were able to successfully argue that there was no legal statute directly naming Latinos as a class of people who could be segregated under Plessy. It was illegal to exclude Mexicans and other Latinos from public spaces. However, other rulings such as *Del Rio Independent School District vs. Salvatierra (1930)* proved that Anglo Americans found new ways to exclude all Mexicans, using the question of their fluency in English as a straw man to segregate them out of white schools. Often children of Mexican descent were perfectly fluent in English, but were still excluded under that pretense (Menchaca 1993). Many anti-miscegenation laws were also passed that, given the complicated racial categories that many Mexican Americans now occupied, made it difficult for them to marry other Mexican Americans, much less white people (Menchaca 2007). The pretense for segregation was that being in the presence of a white person was a privilege, but that white people who had to be in the presence of people of color were having their rights abused. The group of people that were now labeling themselves as Mexican Americans, began to challenge these segregation laws when they could. Often they were unable to fight this segregation for three main reasons: federal, state and local law supported segregation; many white elites now had economic power and employed the vast majority of Mexican Americans; and finally, vigilante and state violence could be, and frequently was, used to maintain the racial order (Chacón and Davis 2006; Menchaca 2001).

State and Vigilante Violence

The use of state and vigilante violence as a means to reinforce the new racial order became most prominent right after the Mexican-American War had ended. Often it was a combination of state authorization of violence against Native American groups, Mexican Americans, and other people of color, combined with jingoistic vigilantes that were given temporary extra-legal rights to physically eliminate, attack or intimidate these same groups. In 1849, Congress gave the orders to the U.S. War Department that Indians were to either be placed on reservations or exterminated if they refused. There were a documented 310,000 Indians in California in 1850, and by 1855 they had declined to 50,000. By 1870 that last figure was cut in half. There is no doubt that the military and vigilantes went on widespread extermination campaigns across the Southwest. While some Indians went to reservations and others later identified themselves as Mexican in order to survive, many more were completely obliterated. Also, under California's Act of 1850, also known as the Indentured Act, those Indians classified as 'vagrants' or orphaned minors could be placed in indentured servitude and often were. Poor Indians were allowed to be placed in bondage for any punishable offense. This was later amended so that any Anglo American could make a complaint about the activities of an Indian, and have them enslaved and sold at auction within twenty-four hours (Chacón and Davis 2006; Menchaca 2001).

These laws were often in response to Anglo American migrants that had recently arrived in the Southwest in search of cheap land or riches in the California Gold Rush. The migration was driven forward by an ideology of Manifest Destiny, the belief in expansionism with other popular ideas of the era, including Romantic Nationalism, American exceptionalism and a belief in the natural superiority of the English-speaking peoples. In the case of California, many foreign miners had already received word of the riches in the area and were already hard at work by the time many Anglo Americans arrived from the east coast. Miners from Austrailia, Sonora, Argentina, France and China were already mining for their fortune in the area, and from many reports, they were often

more skilled at the work than most Anglos that arrived along the proverbial or literal Oregon Trail. The first Anglos to arrive actually already lived in Oregon territory, but they were to be joined by thousands and thousands of others from the east. Quickly, nativistic beliefs cropped up amongst Anglo miners, who viewed the territory in question as conquered by their country, and therefore, inherently theirs for the taking. Sometimes jealous Anglo miners took it on themselves to run miners of other nationalities and backgrounds out of a coveted area. In absence of laws around the Gold Rush, Manifest Destiny often determined proprietary rights. This nativism was complex, because it contained class antagonism both towards the elite, such as rich Southerners that brought their slaves to mine gold, but also to those considered to be "cheap labor." This complex ideology was to give birth to vigilantism in increasingly modern forms. The classic Western vigilante, to this day, asserts the right to act because the state is either in the hands of criminals, in default of its fundamental obligations or is absent completely (Chacón and Davis 2006; Chan 2000; Menchaca 2001).

In terms of the Gold Rush, many argue that increasing racial violence against Indians, Mexicans and foreigners, such as Chinese miners, coincided with the point in history when California mining became less open and adventurous, and instead concentrated into fewer and fewer capitalist hands. Those Anglos that came late or that did not succeed in getting rich off resources that were increasingly out of reach, demanded land and other opportunities to raise their status. Many were more than willing to kill or enslave people for this wealth, and especially in California they carried these massacres out on a large scale. Groups such as the Glanton gang murdered, raped and scalped their way from Chihuahua to San Diego, feeling that Manifest Destiny was a "god-like license" to murder and pillage through Indian adobe villages and camps. The classic tales of desperados such as Juan Flores, Pio Linares and the Joaquin Marietta, characterized as criminals, were in fact social bandits or guerilla leaders battling it out in a grim racial conflict between Anglo

vigilantes and the now dispossessed *vecinos.* The state, only overtime gaining more and more executive power, was known to either overlook this violence, and over the decades began to deputize these self-proclaimed 'protectors of the law' (Chacón and Davis 2006).

While in the 19th century, vigilantes consisted of Anglo working and middle classes trying to increase their wealth via primitive accumulation, by the 20th century, they were led, organized and often comprised of the white elite. Vigilantes almost always worked in tandem with the large owners of agribusinesses, manufacturing plants and media tycoons to get rid of minorities that were no longer wanted in a particular industry, especially if they were organizing into unions. They went on wild rampages against the Chinese, Filipinos, Mexican "Zoot Suiters" and radical political groups such as the Industrial Workers of the World, also known as the Wobblies. Even the traditionally Southern Ku Klux Klan spread to the Southwest by the mid-1920s, where they held intimidation rallies to keep Mexican workers and labor organizers afraid. At many points, local and state governments deputized well known vigilante groups such as the American Legion, American Protective League, Loyal Order of the Moose, Native Sons of the Golden West, the State Federation of Labor and even Teamsters to attack agricultural workers out on strike. Many labor organizers and strikers were beaten mercilessly, their children burned in hot liquids, their homes set on fire and their labor union offices ransacked. While industrial workers were also attacked by vigilantes, in rural California, the violence reigned supreme. This not only affected the wealth and health of Mexican American communities throughout the Southwest, but it set agricultural workers wages and rights back for almost fifty years. Over time, the state took more and more control of these operations of intimidation, but they were dependent on this extra-legal violence for well over a century (Chacón and Davis 2006; Menchaca 1995; 2001).

Accommodation, Rebellion and Circumvention: Mexican American Women of the Southwest, 1848-1948

Mexican American women on the frontier of the United States in the 1800s were active community members that were both shaped by and resisted the layering of Spanish-Catholic and then Anglo-Protestant patriarchies before and after the Mexican American War. While they were split along class, racial and subsequent national lines, their history has been unearthed and complicated by scholars such as Vicki Ruiz, Deena Gonzalez and many others. Through oral histories, archival records and popular ballads and legends, scholars have pieced together the stories of these frontier women of color, and their experiences before the development of the Chicano movement. I focus primarily on women after the Mexican American War in the current United States southwest given the way that Anglo-Protestant mores, economies and institutions created a new particular rupture in women's lives. How these women actively dealt with the transition from mercantile to industrial capitalism, along with new governmental systems and social orders was a testament to their survival skills and ingenuity. How women defined their sexuality and gender in the face of great restrictions and complications would shape the generations of Chicanas to follow. Many terms may be used to describe these women, but scholars commonly refer to colonist women of the times as Spanish Mexican to reference the historical regimes that shaped their development, along with their Spanish and Indian ancestry (Gonzalez 2001; Ruiz 2008). Other scholars have challenged this limited racial definition, which excludes the African heritage many of these women also had (Menchaca 1993; 2001; 2007). After the Mexican American War, under the new Anglo racial and state order, many of these same women are defined as Mexicanas or Mexican Americans (Ruiz 1987; 1993; 2008). I will refer to women colonists as Spanish Mexican before the War, *vecinas* during the immediate aftermath of the War and the uncertainty of their new citizenship, and Mexican Americans as the new racial, patriarchal, economic and state order entrenched.

The "Welcoming" Generation

Spanish Mexican women before the war Mexican American War had more rights than their Anglo counterparts north of the border. These women colonists under the Siete Partidas and later the Mexican Constitution were allowed to control their property before and after marriage, hold one half interest in the community property they shared with their spouses, leave behind their property in wills and sue and be sued in court. Anglo women north of the border became "femme covert" upon marriage, which made them essentially dead in the eyes of the law. Typical custom in Spanish Mexican women's wills were that they would leave their property to any living daughter first, while their husbands would leave property to their sons. Many times women appear in the court records defending their honor, suing their husbands for beating them or abandoning them, or on rare occasions, working out business disputes. On the frontier, the weak central Mexican government rarely had much direct control, and many decisions were made quickly by local authorities to keep the peace. Women's property was defined and protected in the context of a relationship that was sanctioned by the state and the church, a relationship that typically served men. This both protected and limited Spanish Mexican women's rights. Regardless, court rulings would rarely run any individual out of town or imprison them, instead judges and priests encouraged amends and reconciliation amongst fellow colonists. With new Anglo institutions arriving after the war, prisons, asylums and poor houses would be seen as punitive solutions that had before been left to the family and community. While somewhere between five and ten percent of these women were from the upper class, most Spanish Mexican women had working class jobs such as seamstresses, laundresses, domestics and ironers. Regardless, women of all classes appeared before the courts, which is where historians are most frequently able to see their voices preserved in written record (Gonzalez 2001).

While Spanish Mexican women colonists were negotiating the influx of Anglo male

immigrants in the 1830s and 40s, Christianized Indian women, *genizaras,* detribalized Indian women and resistant Indian women of tribes like the Apache remained in constant interaction with these frontier towns and settlements. At this time, colonists still had a mixed and sometimes strained relationship with these Indian groups, and while some of the more resistant Indian tribes raided their settlements, colonists also raided Indian villages and captured, enslaved and indentured many Indian women and children. This chaotic landscape only increased as first Anglo American men began to immigrate into these areas, and after the Mexican American War, migrated in mass to the Southwest with their new traditions, industrial goods and punitive institutions. The first Anglo American men to come to towns such as Santa Fe were travelers, who reported back to the East on their journeys and the people they met. In their particular anti-Catholic narrow worldview, the Spanish Mexican colonists that lived on the frontier were immoral, lazy and the women were flashy and sexually debased. In Santa Fe, they had a particular obsession with a successful businesswoman named Barcelo, or Lady Tules, which they referred to as "harsh" and "shrewd." Many unfounded legends swirled around her in their journals, from accusations of running a brothel to being a prostitute herself. Regardless, she was known for her very popular gambling hall, her quick wit, and ability to sell and make profit off of new Anglo American industrial products entering the settlement. Anglo American Protestant men, in these travel journals, began creating stereotypes of Spanish Mexican women that would set the tone for their particular racialization and sexualization in the coming centuries (Gonzalez 2001).

After the Mexican American War, the citizenship and land deed sections of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were immediately being questioned in the new United States territory of the Southwest. Simultaneously, Anglo American migration, starting mostly with men, and slowly incorporating Anglo American women, flooded the Southwest. These colonizers and opportunists sought wealth and prestige in a land they saw as fairly unoccupied and dripping with prospect.

Knowing little about the Spanish Mexican colonists and various Indians they encountered, they intended to impose their eastern forms of capital on the area, along with their governmental institutions. Two phases of capital were instituted in many areas in the Southwest: first the mercantile influx of industrial goods from the East and Mid-west and then the phase where industrial production was relocated to these areas and the local labor force was secured in the name of enterprise. Meanwhile, the new court systems were even more stringent on *vecinas* rights, along with converting the entire legal process to one in the English language. These fluxes put many *vecinas* at risk, and census data indicates that many more of these women entered the working class with lower wages than ever. The small *vecina* elite started to see their land and property challenged in courts by voracious Anglo lawyers, judges and businessmen. In court records, it is clear that after the War, *vecinas* less frequently left their property in their wills to their daughters, but instead left it to their sons. This shift indicates that they were more than cognizant of the new regime that allowed women even less voice in protecting what property was not taken from them by force or legal loopholes. Even poorer *vecinas* left what they had more often to their sons after the war, which was a clear change from before (Gonzalez 2001).

Scholars contend that this "welcoming" generation of women took three typical tactics when it came to the new Anglo economic and legal regime that swept in: they sometimes were accommodating, openly rebellious, or used various means of circumvention in order to survive. Barcelo in Santa Fe was seen as someone who both accommodated the new Anglo economic system and profited from it, but many women took part in small rebellions against the US army's occupation. Others used what means they had to circumvent the new colonization taking place. Sometimes having a relative that could read English, using a legal document where they could place property into a trusted male family member's hands, marrying single Anglo men, or even finding work as a domestic in new Anglo American households were varying devices that *vecinas* used to

survive the new tumultuous climate. Sometimes, however, their ongoing hostilities with resisting Indian tribes meant that Anglo Americans could divide and conquer these women and their families. Continuing raids on settlements by resisting Indian tribes and on Indian villages by frontier people under the new Anglo regime meant that poor *vecinas* and poor Indian women could become indentured servants if they were captured under certain circumstances. Regardless, the major trends indicated that women lost property, prestige, and many were forced to work for the new Anglo residents that were previously immigrants on their land.

In sum, *vecinas* had being colonized, with new racial and legal codes to adhere to. Indian women that survived the genocides under the Manifest Destiny campaign by Anglo Americans chose different paths of survival, but many began classifying themselves as Mexican to escape murder or indentured servitude (Menchaca 2001). *Ricos* and *ricas* that were able to prove they had only Spanish heritage in court were often able to achieve the same rights as whites in the United States, though initially *ricas* were still more disadvantaged given laws on Anglo married women's property rights. Interestingly, the more liberal laws on women's property rights from Spain and Mexico were said to influence the laws of California, Texas and other Southwestern states, and by the 1870s, married "white" women were given more control over their property than ever before. Regardless, most *vecinas* were given limited or no citizenship rights under the new state constitutions, with many Indian women and children grouped in with them. The role of Mexican women would soon change as more Mexican women began to enter the United States as a result of the Mexican revolution. Immigrant women from Mexico were racialized and sexualized in a similar fashion.

Mexican Immigration

Immigration from the interior of Mexico continued after the Mexican American War and grew immensely in 1910 when civil war erupted in Mexico. Between 1870 and 1910, Mexico fell

under the dictatorship of Porifirio Diaz. During this period, Diaz instituted a modernization program in Mexico. To fund the program, he attracted foreign investors by giving them land, dismantling all labor laws, and removing tribal Indians from their land. By 1910, U.S. corporations had become Mexico's main investors and owned approximately one-quarter of Mexico (Gilly 2005). The Mexican people, fueled by intellectuals, called this act U.S. imperialism and launched a battle to remove Diaz and terminate the hold U.S. corporations had over Mexico. Francisco I. Madro led the charge, with the support of Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata. They successfully launched the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and removed Diaz from office. However, the revolution did not end there and the battle over who was to govern Mexico continued into the 1920s due to the different material interests these various revolutionaries represented and the inability for them to solve the question of land distribution (Gilly 2005; Reed 1969).

During this difficult period thousands of Mexicans migrated to the U.S. in search of economic and political relief. This period coincided with the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, as a labor shortage emerged in the agricultural fields of California (Galarza 1964; Chacón and Davis 2006). Mexican male labor was desired by Anglo growers in California, and the exodus to that region followed. Immigration, however, also continued to other parts of the U.S. as Mexican agricultural labor was also needed. Mexican labor also followed and was employed by the railroads that connected central Mexico to the heartland of the United States (Ruiz 2008).

Many Mexican women also chose to immigrate for many reasons, including following their male partners, escaping violence at home or in the community as single mothers, or as adventurers trying to make their way in a new land. However, women were less desired by the U.S. lawmakers and border officials because they were seen as likely "burdens to the state." Regardless, many women got to the United States and found work. Work for Mexican American women and Mexican

immigrant women was focused primarily in the service sector (38%), blue collar economy (25%), and in agriculture (21%). Only three percent of Mexican American and Mexicana women were considered professionals, and ten percent had clerical or sales positions (Barrera 1979, 131). Women in agriculture often followed their families' migratory pattern that mimicked the jobs available for a particular crop and season. Women who followed their men working on the railroad often made homes in boxcars or permanent boxcar communities, keeping others children and selling homemade items to supplement their income. Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women were known to work a double shift every day, one for the *patron* in the fields/factory/mill and one for the *patron* at home, taking care of children, cooking and cleaning. In 1923, a Department of Labor Study stated that only 14 of 454 working mothers interviewed were relieved by other adults in cooking and only 42 women were assisted by a child. Regardless of their working class occupation, many women also kept gardens and livestock to supplement the extremely low wages they received on the job. They also would use *curas*, people with knowledge of traditional natural medicine, and *parteras*, midwives, since access to doctors was minimal or non-existent (Ruiz 1987; 2008).

Acculturation, Resistance and Women of Mexican Descent

Acculturation had a constant pull on Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women in the United States. While many actively resisted this, many others embraced opportunities to further incorporate into the "American" way of life. This American lifestyle was often associated with two characteristics: education and consumerism. However, US legal institutions and churches of various persuasions also made specific efforts to "Americanize" Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women through programs that offered both economic benefits and ideological dissemination. These women were seen by Anglo missionaries and social scientists as the gatekeepers of the "aberrant" Mexican culture, and therefore they were targeted for conversion. For instance, historian Vicki Ruiz studied a Methodist mission called Houchen which included a clinic and school in El Paso, Texas.

While the Methodists were trying to acculturate the Mexican and Mexican-American population through various education and indoctrination programs, Mexican American mothers often picked which services they needed for themselves and their families (the medical clinic and occasionally the daycare for working mothers), while avoiding the programs that promoted Anglo ideology such as Bible Schools. The clients eventually modified the overall mission of the facility into one of a non-denominational social services location. Once again, Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women used strategies of survival without necessarily acculturating (Ruiz 1991).

If there was any acculturation technique that seemed most effective in changing some of Mexican American women's values, it was the medium of popular culture. In the 1920s, Mexican American girls and teenagers were often pulled by their family to remain away from boys and keep the family honor through their "purity." However, they were also pulled by radio programs, movies and magazines in both Spanish and English that promoted flapper styles, bobbed haircuts and advice about how to kiss. Once again, teenagers and young women often chose to either accommodate their parents' traditional cultural demands, openly rebel against them, or circumvent rules by "losing *la duena*" or changing clothes at school and changing back before getting home. Many of these young women, like their male counterparts, would quit school by 8th grade in order to enter the workforce and help support their families. However, earning money gave many young women new influence in the family, since children often brought in at least 35% of the families' earnings. Some young women didn't mind parental supervision and contributing all their wages to the family, while others quickly mimicked their Anglo coworkers by buying themselves makeup, silk stockings, and sometimes leaving home for good and moving in with Anglo coworkers in urban apartments. Often, due to racial oppression and stigmatization, women would use skin bleaching creams that were advertized as giving them the beauty, "lightness" and assumed power that white women had over their men and in social settings (Ruiz 1993; 2008).

The continual acculturation process that various generations of Mexican American women experienced and often resisted, would affect how they and their male counterparts treated new immigrants from Mexico. Over time, this led to intra-group conflict where older generations of Mexican Americans expected immigrants to speak English, wear Americanized dress and use different mannerisms in public. However, due to the racial hierarchy in the United States that often lumped Mexican Americans in together with new immigrants from Mexico, solidarity around political issues was also common (Blauner 1987; Menchaca 1995). After the Wall Street crash of 1929, many Mexican immigrants were scapegoated as "taking American jobs," and this led to massive deportations. It is estimated that over 500,000 people were deported or repatriated to Mexico between 1931 to 1934. This made up one third of the Mexican and Mexican American population in the United States at the time. Although Mexican Americans had citizenship and many had lived for generations on US soil, many were lumped in with new immigrants and deported out of the country. While many of these immigrants and citizens were able to eventually return, it ruined many people's lives and savings in the process. Many others were forced to forge a completely new existence south of the border, Mexican citizenship or no. This racial system helped to create both tensions and solidarities amongst Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrant newcomers. These forms of intra-group conflict and solidarity were most often seen in the three main types of resistance that Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants participated in during the century after the Mexican American War: trade unionism, *mutualista* societies, and electoral politics (Menchaca 1995; 2001; Ruiz 1987; 2008).

When cannery women, mostly made up of Mexican Americans, Mexican and Eastern European immigrants, were ready to go on strike, it wasn't the wages or lack of hammers that broke the camel's back. It was the jagged work benches that tore their silk stockings. In 1938, silk stockings were accessories to unionization of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied

Workers of America. This is just one example of how many Mexican American women and their immigrant counterparts resisted low wages, discrimination and state violence. Some placed their faith in the union local, some in *mutualistas,* and others in the ballot box. Mexican Americans have long had a history of community organizations, activism and politics of resistance. In unions, women distributed food, formed picket lines, taunted scabs, and when attacked by police, fought back. Women through *mutualistas*, sought to help their neighbors; they worked within their communities in a public way, although their labor generally remained invisible outside the barrio. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was a *mutualista* that also involved itself in politics, but it restricted membership to English speaking citizens only. This reinforces how immigrants were sometimes blamed by Mexican Americans as part of the reason why they were discriminated against. However, LULAC women were bridge people simultaneously seeking to meet the material needs of newcomers and neighbors while engaging in direct action for civil rights. These mutual aid societies often helped those in need in the Mexican American community, acting as a public service provided by the community and a form of internal insurance (Ruiz 1987; 2008).

Women also were front and center in electoral politics as politicians and party members actively getting out the vote. In 1936, the first Spanish-speaking woman took her seat as a member of the state legislature. At age twenty-six, Concha Ortiz y Pino from Galisteo, New Mexico became the youngest woman elected to state office. She did very, very well for her six year term and during her last term she served as the majority whip in the New Mexico's House of Representatives for the Democrats. She was from an elite family and ran out of a noblesse oblige, not progressive politics. She finished her last term in 1942 and also graduated from the University of New Mexico and married her favorite professor, Victor Kleven. She was known as the most powerful woman in the state and was credited with legislation requiring New Mexican buildings to have handicap access. Many working class Mexican American women rose into politics first through community or union

organizing, and then got placed on ballots. Self-help, reciprocity, and *commadrazgo* are woven through the narratives of Mexican American women. With pickets, baskets and ballots, they wove tapestries of resistance. Few Mexican American women were able to either maintain or attain elite positions such as Ortiz y Pino. Ultimately, most successful Mexican American women did not leave the working class, though many worked their way up in the working class to slightly better paying jobs and positions (Ruiz 1987; 2008). This would begin to change as the Bracero Program started in 1942 and brought in guest worker Mexican men as a clientele for Mexican American small business owners (Menchaca 1995). As the small Mexican middle class began to grow, due to *bracero* clientele and the economic benefits of the G.I. Bill that many Mexican American men earned after fighting in WWII, new expectations for civil rights were raised as well. The forms of resistance, survival and ingenuity in the face of racial and gender discrimination would have a lasting legacy that Chicana artists would pull from in the future.

Development of the Chicana/o Movement

"¡CUIDATE, MEJICO! Tus hijos mejicanos los Chicanos de U.S.A. ya saben vivir dentro del estómago del Tiburón, ya conocen bien su brutalidad su racismo, su odio a los mejoicano, negros y raza de color," wrote the famous leader of the Chicano Movement, Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzalez in his poem titled *¡¡Cuidate, Méjico!!*. (Mariscal 2005) By the time he wrote this in 1979, the Chicano movement of the United States, as a political grassroots movement, had come to a close. However, it expressed the mood of the many Mexican American students and urban community members that took up the explicit fight against racism, police brutality and institutional discrimination. This was a movement that made connections to the struggles for black civil rights, the Vietnam anti-war movement and the women's rights movement. It found its heroes in figures such as Cesar Chavez in the California led farm worker's struggle and Reyes López Tijerina in New Mexico's land grant

fight. While students and community members took on the fight against urban forms of racism, they also developed militant leaders of both genders. The women leaders of the movement were instrumental to both its political successes and its artistic cultural production. In this section, I will trace some of the major moments in this struggle, its development of early Chicana critiques, and the artistic production that led to the cultural production of Chicano/a identity.

The Chicano movement was one that first emerged in the 1960s at a time of political upheaval in the United States. While many historians have written of this 'unrest' as surprising and often unwarranted, people that were the most affected by racism, sexism, inequality and the Vietnam war viewed these movements as long overdue. This was especially true of Mexican Americans, who had experienced a five hundred year long history of colonialism, U.S. imperialist expansion, racism and inequality. The Spanish colonization of Mesoamerica was followed later by the Texas-Mexico conflict of 1836 and the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-48. In these last two conflicts, the fledgling Mexican State had half of its lands forcibly taken by the States. The people that were still on this land were often denied the rights to the grants they had; then they underwent segregation, severe exploitation, racism and police brutality. Future immigrant groups from Mexico were often hampered by racist policies, or allowed in with severe human rights abuses when high exploitation was needed. (Chacon and Davis 2006) While critics often claimed that later generations of Mexican immigrants voluntary entered the U.S. and were not part of a internal colonialism, "classifying this process as immigration misses the point that the Southwest is historically and culturally a Mexican, Spanish-speaking region…[F]rom the perspective of conquest that many Mexicans have retained, the movement has been to a land that is still seen as their own (Blauner 1987)."

While it is true that resistance to U.S. imperialist and colonial domination of the southwest has been ever present in Mexican and Mexican American communities, the Chicano movement

represented a decisively radical break with previous generations (Muñoz 2007; Vigil 1984). While the Mexican-American[8] generation strove for community advancement and better opportunities for the community in the 1930s-1950s, it also tended to accept Americanization and assimilation as necessary for the advancement of the people. The Mexican-Americans formed groups such as the Mexican American Movement, Inc (M.A.M.) and later groups such as Mexican American Educators (AMAE) and the Community Service Organization (CSO) that were involved in liberal efforts at bettering the community and offering greater educational opportunities for self-advancement. These earlier generations enabled a small Mexican American intelligentsia and middle class to take hold in U.S. society. The inroads Mexican-Americans made in these sections of the U.S. economy laid the groundwork for the subsequent radicalization inside the universities and high schools all across the Southwest.

Many writers directly connect the Mexican-American struggle of the first half of the century, as well as the farmworkers and land rights movements, as Chicano (Rendon 1971; Rosales 1996; Vigil 1984; Ybarra-Frausto 1978). Others contend that the Chicano movement was clearly based in the student movement and urban community groups (Muñoz 2007). Some intellectuals attempted to make a compromise, arguing the Chicano movement was "an acceleration in a different register" from the Mexican-American generation, but still incorporated Chavez and Tijerina as Chicano in their "militant ethnicity-based politics" (Mariscal 2005). However, neither Tijerina who focused on getting Hispanos their land grants back, nor Chavez, who self-identified as union organizer, accepted the cultural nationalist politics that later defined the student movement of Chicanos. The student movement began with blowouts from four East Los Angeles high schools on March 3rd, 1968; a Los Angeles reporter labeled it 'The Birth of Brown Power.' Activism at high

[8] Like Muñoz (2007), I will refer to the 1930-1950s generations of Mexican Americans as 'Mexican-Americans.' While Muñoz does this to separate them politically, I just find it as an easy way to make a distinction between the generations and their different struggles.

schools and universities exploded, culminating in the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference hosted by the Crusade for Justice in March of 1969. The Crusade for Justice was originally "a multi-issue, broad-based civil rights organization oriented toward nonviolence" that later symbolized self-determination and a strong nationalist ideology (Muñoz 2007, 91). It was Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzalez, Crusade for Justice's main leader that reinforced this change at the conference that spring. By the conference at the University of California-Santa Barbara the following month, *Chicano* had become a household term.

It was at those conferences that Alurista first read his famous poem about Aztlán as the original homeland of the Aztec people, who Chicanos were supposedly descendants from (Rendon 1971). While often contested, there is some anthropological and archaeological evidence that Aztlán might have originally been located in the U.S. southwest, as Alurista indicated (Menchaca 2001). Alurista's poem, along with poems such as '*I am Joaquin,*' set the philosophical and political project for the conferences. At the conference in Denver, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* was adopted as the Chicano manifesto, with Alurista's poem as its preamble. It emphasized Chicanos Aztec heritage, with a strong rejection of the degrading and individualizing gringo culture, and demanded a new struggle for self-determination. This manifesto was adopted and its ideas were implemented at the University of California, Santa Barbara. All of the various Mexican-American student groups, such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), all changed their names to El Moviemiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) to emphasize their national connections and agreement. *Chicanismo* was a term that was coined by the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcellos to imply that the people of mixed European and indigenous blood would one day form a 'superior race' (Muñoz 2007, 97). The students adopted this term, despite its negative connotations amongst some community members, to assert Bronze Power and a new future.

Alurista and Gonzalez's poetry was just one example of how artists shaped the cultural and historical traditions that many Chicanos would later call their own. Artwork was prominent in every Chicano journal, on posters for meetings, murals, and in theatrical performances done by groups like El Teatro Campesino (Goldman 1994; Muñoz 2007). This art was not only essential to expressing a new Chicano/a culture, but had the explicit purpose of 'consciousness-raising.' Murals and poster art were some of the most prominent and lasting effects of the Chicano movement. They often "drew on historical inspirations such as the Mexican Revolution and the Indian legacies, thus reminding viewers of the rich past and revolutionary potential of the Chicano people (Vigil 1998:203)." Posters were not only essential in spreading news of protests and other events, but were crucial to conveying information and cultural pride to the working class and powerless communities. During that period, the "dedicated Chicano, *raza*, and other poster artists of the era shared the philosophies and political positions they articulated in posters and considered their production a form of political activity (Goldman 1994, 166)." These artistic expressions were explicitly political and had the aim of producing "immediate empathy in order to motivate action (Vigil 1984, 205)." A part of the movement from the very beginning, "art, dance, music and literature became integral parts of a renewed emphasis on cultural heritage (Ybarra-Frausto 1978, 83)."

The Chicano movement never has had an official end date, but it did experience the major down-swing in activism around the end of 1971. One of the last major demonstrations was organized by the Brown Berets, a paramilitary Chicano organization, and MEChA against the war in Vietnam. It took place on August 29th, 1970 in a park , Los Angeles, with over 20,000 people in attendance. It started enthusiastically, but the police attacked the demonstration without provocation and killed three Mexican-Americans, injured hundreds of people and arrested Corky Gonzalez and many from his Crusade for Justice contingent. In response to the police brutality and murders, thousands of protestors "took out revenge by burning businesses and automobiles on Whittier

Boulevard, one of the major thoroughfares in East Los Angeles (Muñoz 2007, 104)." These riots, while quite radical in their explosive critique of racism and police brutality, in many ways signified the dying fits of the student movement. Internal contradictions and debates within the movement around the validity of cultural nationalism, machismo and the validity of capitalism became prominent (Blackwell 2003; Muñoz 2007; Rosales 1996; Vigil 1984).

One of the most outstanding critiques of the Chicano movement was developed by Chicana activists, who were often the backbone to organizing the movement, while receiving little credit and leadership positions for their work. Many authors mistakenly argued that women of color critiques only developed in the 1980s, marked by Gloria Anzaldua and Cherie Moraga's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* release in 1981. However, there were already feminist critiques in the Chicano movement before the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in March 1969. At the conference, a few Chicana feminists organized a workshop with the intent of drafting a resolution regarding gender inequality. However, the pressure to conform to Chicanismo and its strict views on masculine and feminine roles led the Caucus to report that "it was the consensus of the group that the Chicana does not want to be liberated (Longeaux y Vasquez 1970)." Chicanas were under a lot of pressure to reinforce the Chicano movement and build solidarity at the expense of their own unique experiences of oppression. It was clear from the male leadership of the movement that "commitment to the revolution was measured by how 'down' you were to a revolutionary man, and new female members complained that initiation into the movement included attempts by the men to 'revolutionize' their pants off (Blackwell 2003)."

However, many developing Chicana feminists saw this outcome as extremely problematic. Cultural nationalism focused on the strength of Chicano men, and often they associated any feminist critique as stemming directly from middle class Anglo women's influence. An explicit example of

this comes from Armando Rendon's *Chicano* Manifesto where he states, "the essence of machismo…is as much a symbolic principle of the Chicano revolt as it is a guideline for the conduct of family life, male-female relationships, and personal self-esteem (Rendon 1971, 104)." Women who critiqued the movement for giving Chicanas secretarial positions and other typical gender roles in the movement were labeled *vendidas*, *agringadas*, *Malinches* and sellouts. Some authors argued that Chicanas were often hesitant to take leadership positions because of the difficulty it would afford them (Muñoz 2007). However, Chicana authors were quick to contend that many women, such as the democratically-elected president of MEChA Anna Nieto-Gomez in 1969-1970, stepped up to leadership roles despite the hostile environment (Blackwell 2003; Roth 2004). Even Chicanas who achieved leadership positions were often undermined by the older male leadership, and new formations such as the *Hijas de Cuahtémoc* were threatened with the hanging of their effigies and mock burials. Regardless, the Hijas and other Chicana groups began to create their own publications such as the group's organizational newspaper and later a journal that was released in 1973 called *Encuentro Feminil*. These newspapers and journals not only contained feminist critiques of the movement and society in general, but always included literary work, poetry and Chicana artwork.

In addition to these publications, Chicanas began to host their own conferences, such as the California State University – Los Angeles Chicana Educational Conference on May 8th, 1971, which had 250 Chicanas in attendance. A couple weeks later, there was a conference of over 600 Chicanas from twenty-three states that took place in Houston. These conferences, print cultures and artwork were a means for Chicanas to form networks, develop critiques and discuss and debate issues that affected them. Many of the issues addressed at these conferences included "sterilization and reproductive health, welfare and labor rights, employment and gender discrimination, access to health care, Chicana incarceration, familial and cultural roles, as well as sexism, sexual politics, and

women's role in the movement (Blackwell 2003)." These conferences and short-lived publications also created a network of Chicana feminists that would later develop prominence in academia and art as the decade came to a close.

This was just one of the initial fissures to develop in the Chicano movement, most markedly starting in 1975. With the end of the Vietnam War and the decline of many social movements, including the Chicano movement, rifts began to open up in the early alliance of farm workers, urban workers and students. More Chicano students began to enter the middle class after fighting their ways into the Universities and attaining business or professional status, and this reflected in their growing stake in the status quo (Goldman 1994; Maciel & Ortiz 1996). Labor movements continued to rise up, but as the 1970s came to a close, they started to experience a decline that culminated in the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. This was the largest symbol of both the gains and the weaknesses that ended in a rightward swing in US politics. While the Chicano movement had helped make some major labor gains for farm workers in the field, helped end the war in Vietnam, started opening spaces for Chicano/a and Mexican American Studies in many universities across the country, and obtained funding for various community enrichment programs in their neighborhoods, it did not rid the United States of racial and economic inequality. While the art movement was inspired by the Chicano political movement, it was able to maintain itself in various ways long after the huge protests declined.

Public Art: Organizing and Transforming the Movement and Geography

Producing Art that is "appealing to our people"

"El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" charged Chicana/o artists with an important duty, that of "producing literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture"

(Rangel 1998, 226). Many of these artists emerged directly from the movement, or were in regular dialogue and debate with it. Art was meant to explore and define Chicano/a culture, educate Mexican American youth, and transform the cityscapes to reflect the presence of a community that had long been present, although often ignored or unacknowledged. This art was both a medium in which to recover lost history, but also a means of creatively transforming the marginalized position of most Chicanos/as into one of political power. In the visual arts, Chicano/a artists were most frequently committed to making art accessible to the Mexican American community, which meant that murals and posters became the most prevalent mediums used during the 1960s and 1970s (Goldman 1994; Rangel 1998; Ybarra-Frausto 1993). The Chicano/a art movement intentionally targeted these public audiences amongst the Mexican American community; "both as a result of its exclusion from mainstream art institutions (it *did* knock violently on the doors to be accepted in its own terms), and by attempting to by-pass the alienating aspects of art as a consumer product within a consumer society…[it] sought diffusion of its art through an alternative community-based cultural structure: *centros, talleres*, storefront galleries, small presses, street murals, and so on (Goldman 1994, 389)." Political art that was appealing had to be accessible with a relevant message.

Changing cityscapes: Murals, activism and Chicano/a youth

Mexican Muralism, an extremely influential artistic period in Mexican history immediately following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1921, had extended beyond its national borders and the in/famous Big Three had already transformed many of the public walls in the United States in prolonged visits in the 1930s. This was part of a bigger wave of muralism sweeping the Americas. Particularly, these murals were often funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), as a period of New Deal muralism in the United States (Arreola 1984; Marling 1982). Shifra M. Goldman contends that New Deal muralism was not a separate phenomenon, but an extension of the Mexican muralism movement from the previous decade (Goldman 1994, 118). The Big Three, also

known as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, had been commissioned for various murals across the United States after the Mexican Revolution, in such prominent locations as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dartmouth and New York City (Arreola 1984; Brenner 2002; Goldman 1982; 1994). They worked and directed many young artists in the United States in these grand endeavors, influencing a generation of budding socially-minded muralists north of the border. Some of these murals were preserved, but many were torn down, such as Diego Rivera's famous 1933 mural "Man At the Crossroads" mural in the Rockefeller Center. Many others were left to decay, such as Siqueiros' "Tropical America" painted in 1932 on Olvera Street in Los Angeles. The direct connection between Mexican Muralism and the Chicano/a artists, that would later restore works like "Tropical America," are undeniable. These originals were definitely political, and often critical of US imperialism and racism. Chicano/a artists in many ways were able to follow in a magnificent tradition of public political artists from previous decades (Goldman 1982; 1994).

Some Chicana/o artists did poor pastiche versions of the Big Three's murals in the late 1960s, often with no formal training and basing their understanding of muralism on easel painting and getting inspiration from books with small pictures and little to no color. Other street muralists kept to more contemporary themes such as police brutality, gang warfare, injustice, drug addiction, mass deportations, unity of racial minorities, support for the United Farm Workers (UFW), while sprinkling occasional symbols of Aztec pyramids, warriors and other pre-Colombian motifs linking the present to the past. These aesthetic symbols were part of the Chicano/a mission of "creating a bank of visual images and iconography that edified the shift in Chicano consciousness (Rangel 1998, 226)." Some focused on purely local symbols in order to get their primarily Mexican American viewership to identify with its message. Through a deep connection to these localities and an approach to collective input, these artists were often able to tap into the sentiments and

dreams of the emerging Chicano/a public (Goldman 1994; Ybarra-Frausto 1993). Marling argues that when artists take into account public opinion and use symbols and structure that appeal to its intended viewers, "it then becomes possible to suggest why people reacted as they did to the style and content of the murals they scrutinized, thereby expressing their sense of what [the] culture ought to be like (Marling 1982, 3)." With practice and ingenuity, these "wall newspapers" began to transform the urban landscapes and minds of many southwestern cities and their inhabitants, along with Chicago and New York City.

While the artistic movement was not united around the same set of politics that the Big Three tended to loosely adhere to, many were in dialogue with political statements such as "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán." Rangel makes the argument that Chicano/a artists should be defined as "cultural workers" because "culture is a site where power relations [were] mutually shaped, expressed, and contested (Rangel 1998, 226)." As cultural workers, they often negotiated amongst various sections of the community and found a way to express a unified message, while existing in a liminal space themselves. The *movimiento* model of cultural workers "called on Chicano/a artists to dedicate themselves to anti-elite practices that would bring affirmation and pride to the community, the artists engaged in a cultural reclamation through which the traditions of the past could be reanimated in innovative styles (Mesa-Bains 2003, 300)." Many of these "cultural workers" involved the creative input and artistic talent of inner-city youth and other community members in their works.

Interestingly, this often produced a creative feedback mechanism where the practices of graffiti, tattooing, car customizing, speech and dress emerging out of Mexican American youth and/or gang culture had a chance to inspire the style and content of Chicano/a muralism, even at the beginning of its height in 1969 (Cordova 2006; Rangel 1998). When Chicana/o artists were acting

as cultural workers, they often found themselves negotiating between governmental officials that often funded their projects and the increasingly radical political messages that the community demanded in the murals. Many of them, such as lesbian Chicana artist Judith Baca, learned that if she wanted to maintain a longer term program in the community she worked in, she would have to provide counseling services, suicide hotlines and abuse shelters for many of her Chicana/o youth participants. This only magnified many artists' roles as cultural workers and their role as activists in their underfunded and marginalized communities. The political symbolism generated out of the community murals was often so subversive that many governmental bodies would cut off funding for their production, or later have them destroyed.

Why were murals so important to the *movimiento*? They were a means to bypass corporate and governmental media, and instead find a space where Mexican American community members of varying degrees of social and cultural capital could creatively generate a new powerful identity and find a material way to express the change they desired for their communities and the nation. Murals were a space to build community and embrace a form of power politics, whereas graffiti was often an individual form of expression that reflected alienation from politics. Murals were almost always a collective project to one degree or another, and therefore both required and generated resources for the movement, whether it came in the form of government grants, or in pooling of resources that mimicked the *mutualistas* of the previous decades. It also generated intellectual and creative resources for an identity that was finding a voice after centuries of colonialism, racism and oppression. Chicano/a muralists acted as political, intellectual and cultural interlocutors in the communities that they worked in, which often involved daily advocacy and activism. As many scholars have noted, Chicano art also constitutes a process of art-based community-making, not just community-based art-making (Barnet-Sanchez 2005; Cordova 2006; Lipsitz 2001; Ybarra-Frausto 1993). Additionally, the murals had an echo effect on the movement itself, just as the Mexican

Muralists had inside and beyond its borders and time. The creation process itself, denoted as "projection," is far exceeded by the "reciprocation" of the object once it stands alone in existence, meaning that it can continue to influence viewers of it long after it was created (Scarry 1985). Their work was both inspired by and continued to inspire the Chicano/a political movement from 1968-1975.

Activism and Political Posters

Not only did Chicano/a art emerge at the same time as the Chicano Movement, it developed out of the direct needs of the movement itself. As Ybarra-Frausto and many other Chicano/a intellectuals noted, art "was integrated with political rallies, *barrio* social events, and community cultural celebrations where viewers were encouraged to interact with the art and artists (Ybarra-Frausto 1993, 56)." There was no clearer link between the art community and political activism than in the political posters that these artists produced. While muralism was most prominent in the Los Angeles area, poster making flourished most prominently in the Bay Area and Sacramento. The reason for this is linked to the history and geography of these cities. In Los Angeles for many decades, the Mexican and Mexican American population was so large that it vastly outnumbered and often absorbed other Spanish-speaking groups from Central and South America. By contrast, northern California had always been more multinational, meaning that "the term *raza* (our people) used [there] refer[ed] to the mix of peoples from Central and South America, the Carribean, and Brazil, as well as Mexicans and Chicanos (Goldman 1994, 164)." Additionally the spread out architecture of Los Angeles promoted a culture of driving, and therefore murals were often more effective. The Bay Area instead was more compact and had a better public transit system, which meant there was a larger pedestrian population walking around. Therefore, it was not only more difficult to find wall space, but people could easily read and respond to posters (Goldman 1984; 1994).

There were many Chicano poster associations that became well known at the end of the 1960s, including San Francisco's La Raza Graphic Center, Sacramento's Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF) and the Graphic Arts Workshop. However, the real emergence of Bay Area poster art took place in response to the bombing of Cambodia in 1970. Numerous art schools – San Francisco Art Institute, California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco State University, and the University of California, Berkeley – briefly closed in protest to the escalation of the Vietnam War. Many Chicano/a poster artists had preceded this surge with their focus on the 1968 Third World strike at San Francisco State College, gaining inspiration and momentum from the student demonstrations in Mexico during the 1968 Olympics (Goldman 1984; 1994).This strike was organized by the Third World Liberation Front, and during the strike, art students aided by faculty members set up a poster-making workshop for close to a year. This poster workshop did silkscreen posters in support of the strike along with many issues including critiquing capitalism, the police, racial inequality, while using powerful iconography of famous political figures like Zapata and Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Chicano/a poster artists took a great deal of their inspiration from an exhibition of silkscreen posters by the Cuban artist René Mederos put on by the Galería de la Raza in 1970. One of the most famous Chicano poster artists of the time named Rupert García stated that the Cuban artist's use of color and the relationship between form and content made the exhibition stick out. The politics of the Third World Liberation Front emphasized the connections between racism at home and imperialism abroad. The Cuban posters emphasized US imperialism and the revolutionary movement that gained victory in the country in 1959. Later another prominent Chicano poster artist Juan Fuentes organized a Cuban poster exhibition at the California Palace, assisted by students from San Francisco State University. Chicano/a poster artists made sure their posters were not only posted in public places with particular political and cultural messages for the Chicano and Mexican American communities, but they were inexpensive to produce and once again stood in place of and

in contrast to the mass media. These posters not only were imbued with meeting information and propaganda, but the true combination of politics and aesthetics. Their content and form was a revolutionary medium that paralleled the Cuban posters (Goldman 1984; 1994).

Most of the Chicano poster art collectives were dominated by men, and therefore Chicana silk screeners often have to be appreciated on an individual basis, or in publications that started to emerge for Chicana artists' expression. The art movement, while always containing rifts and discontinuities, began to change drastically as the political movement experienced a rapid decline after 1975. One of the longtime emerging rifts in the movement was the feminist critique from inside the movement itself, by Chicana artists. While initially causing conflict, this was a productive critique that would extend Chicano/a art influence for decades to come in both the public venues of the political poster and mural, as well as in art installations in public and private spheres (Goldman 1994; Maciel & Ortiz 1996; Munoz 2007; Roth 2004).

Chapter 3: Chicana Artists Today

Chicana Artists Critique of the Chicano Movement

One of the primary areas where Chicanas were able to maintain the struggle against racism, sexism, and homophobia was in the visual, written and performance arts. One of the first all-women mural teams in the United States was the Mujeres Muralistas that were based out of San Francisco (Cordova 2006; Martinez 2008; Perez 2007). Their most famous mural was titled the "Latino Community" and was finished in 1974, four days before a mural done by three male Chicano artists in the same neighborhood. The mural was "fascinating for its complex collage of ideas, not simply paying tribute to motherhood or indigenous roots, but also invoking ideas about race, gender and political power (Cordova 2006, 366)." The four women artists and their female assistants indicated that the mural was painted in complete collective fashion, without a particular leader. They also pointed out that they were never even considered as potential participants in the mural "Homage to Siqueíros," painted by an all male Chicano muralist team only a couple blocks away. "Latino Community" was just one of many pieces of artwork that inspired Chicana artists all over the country. However, the mural was destroyed by saboteurs, and the building on which it was displayed was later burned to the ground. Only photographs remain of the "Latino Community", while "Homage to Sigueíros" is still prominently displayed and estimated to be worth well over a million dollars.

Chicana artists and intellectuals have remained valiant in the face of blatant gender discrimination inside the movement and racism/sexism outside of the Chicano movement. They also have been essential to the production of cultural, historical and transformative resistance in the arts. In many ways, Chicana art and its complex formulations of subjectivity on the national/sexual/gender/race borders have enabled their persistence over thirty years since the Chicano movement ended. This border experience was most eloquently explained in This Bridge

Called My Back by Anzaldua and Moraga. They stated that, "We are the colored in a white feminist movement. We are the feminists among the people of our culture. We are often the lesbians among the straight. We do this bridging by naming ourselves and by telling our stories in our own words (Anzalua & Moraga 1981, 23)." Chicana feminists have been able to bridge the political divides that brought the Chicano student movement to its knees. In that way, they have strengthened the art movement against racism and sexism while maintaining the cultural production necessary to inspire future forms of resistance.

Chicana *feministas* were hesitant to organize with white women's feminist organizations or reach across racial lines and organize with black feminists. They found that their movement had organically developed out of the needs of activist women inside the Chicano movement, and their dialogue initially remained directed at the movement most of the *feministas* were central in organizing. Two main approaches were taken in their critique of the movement: one demonstrated a more conciliatory tone by situating Chicana feminists within a long history of social movements and activism on the part of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States, and therefore saw feminism as an indigenous and inevitable outcome of the *movimiento* (Barraza 2001; Roth 2004). The second approach emerged over time and confronted the Chicano movement more directly, demanding more responsibility and respect within the movement itself. This more critical approach was labeled by male loyalists as traitorously taken from classic middle-class Anglo feminists. While these main approaches were manifest within the political organizing, they expressed themselves in Chicana artwork and the theorizing of Chicana aesthetics. Meanwhile, Chicana lesbians began to question traditional gender roles and sexualities assigned to Chicanas within and after the movement with creative works. These three approaches and their artistic expressions have grown out of one another, diverged and converged in different times and places (Arredondo et. all 2003; Perez 2007; Roth 2004).

All of these three strands and their moments of synthesis are exhibited in reinterpreting the three main mother figures in Chicano/a mythology, La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche and La Llorona. As Anzaldua notes, in the past the "true identity of all three has been subverted - Guadalupe to make us docile and enduring, la Chingada to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and la Llorona to make us long-suffering people…[and] this obscuring has encouraged the virgen/puta dichotomy (Anzaldua 1993, 38)." These three mothers have been "re-read" by these Chicana artists to express the two diverging *feminista* critiques and the lesbian Chicana critique (Alarcon 1989; Barraza 2001; Esquibel 2006; Mesa-Bains 2003; Rodriguez 1994; Roth 2004). Chicana artists realized "in this human war of images of the divine and religious systems, and of the ideologies that make these intelligible…women have been made lowly by these stories, visual and otherwise, that have rationalized the physical, psychological, social, economic, legal, and spiritual violence against them in male-centered cultures, beginning in the home and religious institutions (Perez 2007, 260)." Using various Chicana artists' depictions of these three mothers, the literature traces some of the new ways they were envisioned to encompass these new feminist insights while following the art movement into its newer expressions in installations, on canvas, and its growing acceptance in galleries and museums.

The change of the art from its higher public profile to its more sporadic accessibility reflects the adaption to a movement that had predominantly left the streets and was "privatized" during the late 1970s and onward into the universities, galleries, community centers, *barrio* visual vernacular and even residential yards (Barraza 2001; Goldman 1994; Mesa-Bains 2003). This "privatization" also took place because, with the exception of the small number of Chicana muralists and poster-makers, not many found it possible to maintain large public works when faced with economic survival and a lack of support structure geared towards their needs. Working outdoors on large scale pieces meant female artists were often subjected to harassment and strenuous work in light of how

their bodies were physically socialized. Meanwhile, the Chicano gallery network began to expand during this time period, making room for Chicana artists. Chicanas began to take inspiration from indigenous folk art, Frida Kahlo's introverted model of expression and the vernacular art of the Southwest (Goldman 1994). Works from many of these art forms will be examined to show how Chicana artists responded and critiqued the movement during its height and after its fall.

From within "el movimiento"

Chicana *feministas* emerging from the Chicano movement found that they were immediately under fire from many Chicano Loyalists, who perceived the Chicanas as threats to the movement's very goals. If Chicanas began to question their roles in the movement and in the Chicano family, it challenged the notions many of the male activists had formed around what Chicano nationhood symbolized. Many Chicanos had pulled much of their inspiration from Mexican writers such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes, both of whom had written extensively about where women belonged in society. This often led to a dichotomy of the virgin/*puta* manifested in the interpretation of three important figures of Mexican and Mexican-American history: La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona and la Malinche. In Paz and Fuentes' writings, la Virgen de Guadalupe was the serene virgin and symbol of Mexican nationhood (Alarcon 1989; Roth 2004). Wolf (2001) in his article "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol" describes the revered national symbol of the this Virgin that is wide spread in both Mexican and Chicano/a culture as a Mexican mastery symbol that incorporates many different strands and levels of motivation brought together historically under its powerful collective representation. He shows how in pre-Hispanic times there was a temple located on Tepeyac dedicated to earth and fertility goddess Tonantzin, known as Our Earth mother, who was associated with the moon, just as is Guadalupe. The half moon in the shrine built to Guadalupe, which is now a basilica, symbolizes the Immaculate Conception. There were reports from Spanish friars fifty years or so after the conquest that the pilgrimages to the shrine were

much like those to the temple before it, and according to numerous reports "they adored the idol of goddess they called Tonantzin, which means Our Mother, and this is also the name they give Our Lady…and many of them understand this in the old way and not in the modern way (Wolf 2001, 141)."

Paz, Fuentes and many Loyalist Chicanos definition of La Virgen as a silent, peaceful redeemer left many Chicana *feministas* wanting. Instead, many Chicana artists intentionally utilized her image to demonstrate her agency and independence. This artistic reimagining really started taking prominence by the mid-1990s and has continued into the 21st century. For instance, in Santa Barraza's piece made of oil on metal titled *Retablo of Soldaderas con Virgencita* (1992) the Virgen is pictured right next to two *soldaderas*, women that fought in the Mexican Revolution of 1910, with straight faces and hands on their gun holsters. Given her folded hands, it is unclear if she is meant to be a *soldadera* as well or if she is merely watching over them. This piece reflects the first tendency in Chicana feminism to reinterpret La Virgen de Guadalupe as part of a history of a larger history of Mexican and Mexican-American women's empowerment and struggle. Barraza's piece does not explicitly challenge the Chicano movement, but instead gives the Virgin's stamp of approval for *mestiza* women struggling against oppression (Barraza 2001). In Ester Hernandez's etching *La Virgen de Guadalupe Defendiendo los Derechos de los Xicanos/ The Virgin of Guadalupe Defending the Rights of the Xicanos* (1975) she portrays the Virgin wearing Karate gear doing a power kick with the veil still hanging behind her head. In contrast to Barraza's Virgin, Guadalupana in this image is actively fighting for Chicanos/as, and even more subversively, she is clearly defending a Chicano with his arms outstretched beneath her. This active fighting *Virgen* is in great contrast to her typical portrayal, and the etching is quite effective as a source of Chicana empowerment.

Another classic example of the re-reading of La Virgen is evident in Yolanda M. Lopez's *Margaret F. Stewart: Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1978) work of oil pastel on paper. Yolanda M. Lopez upheld the "Marxist ideologies of el Movimiento that focused on class and worker solidarity as central to liberation", the "*indigenista* and *mestizo* values of Chicanismo which proudly affirmed a racially inscribed identity of resistance" and was simultaneously "deeply concerned with gender inequalities and issues of autonomy and sexual and vocational self-fulfillment (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 125)." Lopez portrays the Virgin of Guadalupe as a seamstress. This image underscores all of Gaspar de Alba's points, showing a strong working woman with Chicana/o heritage to critique the unseen and under-considered labor of women who sew not only the Virgin's cloak but everyone's clothing. It is clear that the seamstress is associated with Guadalupe, because of the rays of light emanating from her image, the cloak, and roses. It appears as if she is sewing the cloak that could also be a nationalistic flag and the angel has wings that are the colors of the Mexican national flag, which appears to be the black thunderbird motif. The black thunderbird is a revolutionary symbol of *Raza* empowerment, referred to often as the "UFW eagle." It is the representation of the collective struggle for both rural and urban Chicanos. The Guadalupe and black thunderbird image were icons that "galvanized the farm worker marches and strikes – the first organized protest of el Movimiento (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 48)." In this image, Lopez is able to awaken the senses of ethnic pride, feminism, and working class courage.

La Malinche, also known as Doña Marina and Malintzin, was the translator, guide and mistress to Cortez when he arrived to later conquer all of Mesoamerica. She is also in Mexican and Mexican-American folklore attributed with being the mother of all *mestizos*. Her reputation is a tainted one, since she was of Indian heritage, but she still helped Cortez while he was colonizing the area. While La Virgen de Guadalupe was appropriated as a nationalistic symbol of the mother of the nation during the establishment of the Mexican state, other figures such as Octavio Paz and

Carlos Fuentes have attempted to reinterpret La Malinche as the actual mother of Mexico. Paz is the first to imply that Malintzin was raped, calling her *la chingada*, even though what little in the historical record shows no evidence of that. Fuentes instead interprets her willingness to assist Cortez as a vengeful act against her own people. Poet Jose Pachecho wrote a poem called "Traddutora, Traditori" linking the notion that as a translator, who had the ability to mistranslate at will, Malintzin was a traitor and her character was false. Chicanas that were seen as adopting their own protocol or ideas that might have drawn from somewhere else than the idealist traditional patriarchal values of Mexican American culture were often called *chingadas*, even though Chicanos pulled freely from white European theorists such as Marx and Engels for much of their political inspiration (Alarcon 1989; Barraza 2001; Rodriguez 1994). Chicana feminists saw La Malinche as having a lot of re-interpretive capability, since the historical record showed that she was likely of noble birth, sold into slavery by her mother in order to rob her of her inheritance, and that by the time she was fourteen she was given as a gift to Cortez to be his slave.

In order to reascribe agency to Doña Marina, which Chicana artists found to be a more respectful title for La Malinche, they found that it was important to emphasize her great abilities as a translator, who likely knew at least four languages, and a guide. *Feministas* such as Juana Armanda Alegría implied that Malinalli's, the Nahuatl name for Malintzin, actions suggests that her "obedience was to Cortés was not based on weakness or passivity; rather, her compliance was an intelligent response to an alienating experience (Rodriguez 1994, 75)." For Chicana Adeladia del Castillo, Malinche represented a specific female experience and it was being trivialized by authors such as Paz, Fuentes and Pachecho. Malinche is "a key figure in Chicana feminist literary discourse and visual culture as symbol of cultural hybridity, difference, rebellion, and ultimately, female empowerment (Perez 2007, 110)." Chicana artists began displacing La Malinche's traditional icon in order to redefine her agency, and reinterpret their own within and after the

movement.

Santa Barraza's oil and enamel piece on metal called *La Malinche* (1991) is one that she places in direct contrast to Jose Clemente Orozco's mural *Cortés and Malinche* painted in the 1920s at Mexico's National Preparatory School. In the mural, both Cortés and Malinalli are naked, with huge upright poses holding hands facing forward in an impression of strength. However, as Cortés steps over a weak naked Amerindian male, he uses his other hand to restrain La Malinche. Barraza interprets this mural as portraying Malinche as Mexico's Eve and the whole scene is above a maguey plant which is a typical representation of La Virgen de Guadalupe, signifying new beginnings for the young state. Instead, in *La Malinche*, Malinalli is the main figure, emerging naked, with the exception of an indigenous *rodote* on her head, from an inseparable maguey plant where her downcast eyes focus on her lighter skinned *mestizo* fetus between her breasts. In the background, conquistadors and Spanish priests are ravaging the land, but nature is meanwhile assisting Malinalli give birth to a new race. Barraza situates this in her own upbringing as a Chicana and a Mexica-Tejana, stating that "indigenous and colonial women of the borderlands struggled with two, and later three, opposing cultures, confronting sexual and racial oppression and exploitation (Barraza 2001, 10)." Although La Malinche has clearly been violated and abused previous to this piece, she is depicted as a loving and caring mother creating a unique new society and people in the midst of the chaos that exemplified her historical epoch.

In *Codex Delilah: From Mexica to Chicana* (1992), Delilah Montoya translates the Mesoamerican codex into a modern day story of *mestizo* women in the United States through a mixed-media, perimental book. In this piece, Montoya creates the story of Six Deer, "a fictional Mayatec young girl from the Tutuepec region near present day Mexico City…[who] journeys 'pal norte', towards Aztlan (Perez 2007, 215)." In this journey, Six Deer meets Malinche, who is also La

Llorona, describing the conquest of her people. In this work, Malinche is synthesized with La Llorona, in order to emphasize that the myths of these three mothers all were born about the time of the Spanish conquest, and to complicate Malinche's experience as not merely the *puta*/whore, but as a mother crying for her children. Chicana artists took time to find ways in which to adopt La Llorona, but historically tracing the emergence of this trilogy of female experiences was essential to retelling herstory. Incorporating La Malinche as a multi-faceted complex woman encouraged Chicana feminists to hold firm to their place of agency inside and outside the movement.

La Llorona was another classic figure in the Chicano movement, as well as in Mexican folklore. Her legend is that of a beautiful woman named Maria who drowned her children in a bout of insane grief over the betrayal of the man that she loved. When she snapped out of her delirious state, she killed herself out of grief. When she reached the gates of heaven, she was not permitted in without her children. She is known as the bereft ghostly mother that continuously haunts the waterways of Earth crying for her dead children, and in the legend she will kidnap children that wander far from home or are unruly (Barraza 2001; Kirtley 1960). This story initially emerged "during the era of the Spanish Conquest of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) in 1521 (Barraza 2001, 83)." Some contemporary Chicano interpretations of La Llorona are expressed by Rudolfo Anaya who reinterprets her as a woman that realizes her children must die in order to be reborn into better men. This nationalistic interpretation still left La Llorona only in the role of a mother producing a nation, without a voice of her own. Prominent Mexican American dancer and wrier José Limón suggested that Chicana feminists should adopt her as a more palatable mother figure (Alarcon 1989, 78n.51). Some were hesitant at first to interpret her because they felt that La Llorona fails to meet some modern and secularizing factors that Chicanas felt they needed to speak for themselves. The second-wave of feminism wanted to take up issues of self and subjectivity that previous feminist waves ignored in order to obtain rights as mothers and wives.

However, some artists were able to adopt La Llorona and use her as a powerful symbol of the suffering that Chicanas have experienced through centuries of oppression. Santa Barraza uses two pieces: *La Llorona I* and *La Llorona II/The Weeping Woman* (1995) to compare La Llorona as the mythic personage of the historical woman La Malinche. In her second piece, *La Llorona II/The Weeping Woman*, Barraza places La Llorona waist deep in still, cleansing water. Water has a long history of associations with subconscious memory, healing, cleansing, and the giving and taking of life. In the painting she has a tattooed death mask, which in pre-Colombian culture was reserved to honor women as warriors if they died in childbirth. This further aligns La Llorona with the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, who is not only the goddess of earth but also of death (Barraza 2001; Moraga & Anzaldua 1983). In many ways, Barraza is using all of these powerful Aztec women/goddesses to make the larger point that La Llorona can also symbolize the cycle of life that includes death and regeneration. As Dori Lemeh argues, understanding La Llorona "metaphorically, as a symbol for the descendants of the mestizo, is to understand the trauma experienced by those women who brought today's sons and daughters into existence (Barraza 2001, 85)." If La Llorona represents the beginning of the *mestizo/a* then her wailing becomes the voice of cultural endurance and struggle.

Juana Alicia recently raised money for and created the mural *La Llorona's Sacred Waters* (2004), painted on the walls of the San Francisco Mission District at the corners of York and 24th Street. This project was to replace a mural she created in 1983 that had to be replaced due to water damage. Alicia decided to instead focus on a new mural that placed Chicanas at the center of environmental movements, fighting to preserve clean waters and the future of the planet. As the website that was used to solicit funds for the project describes,

> In the center of the composition, a thirty foot tall Chalchiuhtlicue (the Aztec goddess of the water), surrounded by clouds and mountain waterfalls, gives water to the world. The ancient lake Texcoco that once covered the Valley of Mexico emerges from the mists that make up her skirt. To the left of the goddess, Bolivian peasants defeat the fat cats of corporate domination in a fight for the water rights of their country, and to the far left, the farmworkers of India's Narmada Valley hold a protest by refusing to leave their flooded

> homelands, threatened by an enormous dam project. To the right of Chalchiuhtlicue, we see the Llorona herself, embracing one of her children, while extending her hand to those still in the water. She revives the spirits of her children and preserves the planet for future generations. Behind her is the nopal, symbol of Chalchiuhtlicue, the cactus that flourishes, gives fruit and flower despite the harshest of conditions. Its secret is an internal reserve of water. To the right of the Llorona, the Women in Black of Juarez march alongside the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande), demanding to know what has become of the murdered daughters of the border. A maquila (border sweatshop) pours pollution in the background, reviving the spirits of her children and preserving the planet for future generations (www.chicanas.com/jalicia.html 2004).

This mural interprets La Llorona as a savior and redeemer, as well as a guardian of the environment. Alicia utilizes this mural to re-read La Llorona while taking up contemporary issues that affect the Chicano community and beyond. Once again, in both of these pieces, the artists reinforce La Llorona as representing the long history of active and positive women ancestors that Chicanas emulate, without directly critiquing *machismo* of Loyalists. In many ways, this exhibits how "La Llorona's weeping is now interpreted as an oppositional scream against patriarchal inscriptions of womanhood (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 143)."

Judy Baca's life size installation *Las Tres Marías* (1976) was originally used as a performance piece. It involves three life sized panels, with the center on being a mirror that reflects the viewer. On the left is the lifesize picture of a *chola*, or homegirl, in baggy pants and a big sweatshirt, long hair and thick mascara. On the right is a *pachucha* from the 1940s in a tight "black skirt, narrowing at the knees, wide patent-leather belt, tucked-in white blouse with rolled-up sleeves and a butterfly imprinted on one side, a scarf tied around the neck, low-heeled buckle shoes and an ankle bracelet (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 136)." She is sucking on a cigarette with her tight curls held back by razor blades, classic of the *pachucha* style at the time. The exhibit is meant to play on the virgin/mother/whore trilogy of female oppressions, incorporating in many senses La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona and La Malinche into its symbolism. In this exhibit, the viewer is meant to question the stereotypes they hold about themselves and others, while imagining their own identity encompassing them. Through various pieces, Chicana artists have transformed our vision of the

mestiza and history itself.

Visualizing violence: Critiquing machismo in the movement

Feministas over time found that they had to directly address violence and slander in the movement. As Loyalists felt threatened by the emerging Chicana feminist critique, some *feministas* were threatened in various ways including name calling, being harassed at mural sites, receiving threatening phone calls and notes, having their property and/or work vandalized, or even having their homes attacked from the outside while they were inside. Irene Blea, a Chicana feminist, experienced vandalism and an attack to her apartment when someone egged her bar and covered it in toilet paper in the dead of winter one night, and one night when all of her windows and doors were being knocked on in the middle of the night with epithets and slanders being called (Roth 2004). This amount of backlash that happened inside the movement showed how much feminism was seen as threatening by the Loyalists, and also how affective the Chicana feminist critique had become. Goldman demonstrates the continuities and changes in these pieces by describing that Chicana artists overwhelmingly use images of women, their environment and their conditions as prominent themes. Radical Chicana artists decided to exhibit and challenge the particular violence and stereotypes that Chicana women often experience, some utilizing the triology of La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche and La Llorona in a more radical manner (Barraza 2001; Gaspar de Alba 1998; Goldman 1994; Perez 1998; 2007). With the emergence of the first edition of This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color in 1981, edited by Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, the third wave of feminism had begun, including its critique of second-wave feminisms failure to critique of race and sexuality. This analysis, while evident throughout the last three decades, really became prominent in the mid 1980s to today (Anzaldua 2007; Anzaldua and Keating 2002; Roth 2004). At times, artists use more contemporary images in order to reinforce that violence and stereotyping is persistent in the community and the Western patriarchal system at large.

Alma Lopez is playful in her portrayal of the Virgen in her digital print *Our Lady* (1999) by making her image that of a scantily clad *mestiza* woman with her hands on her hips and her head cocked in a stance of defiance. Her breasts and vagina are covered with the Virgin's favorite flower, the rose, and she wears the classic cape and is surrounded in the classic bright yellow light. Her symbol is upheld by an "equally unamused" bare breasted *mestiza* cherub with butterfly wings. La Guadalupana's cape looks as if it was stripped right off the great Aztec stone walls with its subsequent iconography. There were many men that sent letters in protest to this display, wanting it censored. Lopez responded by questioning why women's nude bodies are perceived as sacriligeous. She does not eroticize the images in this print, but instead Lopez's *Lady* seems to ask "And, what of it? (Perez 2007, 266)" In this piece, Lopez defies the male-dominant culture's ideas of which bodies we are allowed to degrade and which ones we should love, based on how they are draped. As Perez notes in reference to the attempted censoring of this piece, "eroticized images that are dehumanizing and violent to women are not only openly tolerated; they are ubiquitous visual reminders of what some men have done, and others will continue to do, to hold power over women (Perez 2007, 206)." Revisualizing this narrative by confusing stereotypes is effective in reimaging a world where women's bodies are not treated as objects with differing functions, depending on their attire.

Isis Rodriguez's Goache on Bristol *Freedom* (1996) directly critiques La Virgen de Guadalupe as a stereotype by placing her iconic image on the top of a *mestiza* woman stripping for numerous cartoon characters. The cartoon stripper is wearing the Virgin like a headdress, which can be read as being patriarchy's "good girl" and meeting the expectations of her primarily male audience. The thought literally fuming from the comic strippers head is materialized by the smaller woman riding away on a motorcycle, while binding the Virgin stereotype with her tailpipe smoke. This Italian watercolor is a critique of the sexist distortions of women and men in the mass media and comic culture. Instead of re-reading La Guadalupana, Rodriguez decides to set her up as a

stereotype that can be easily knocked down in the hypocritical ways that she is used. Here, two stereotypes of women are being layered in innovative ways to re-imagine Chicana sensibility and liberation (Perez 1998; 2002; 2007).

There are not many works on La Malinche in this radical genre, probably due to the fact that she is already seen as a raped, stricken figure who Chicana artists have instead depicted as containing more agency. Instead, La Llorona has been a figure that Chicana artists have utilized to directly critique machismo in the movement and patriarchy in society at large. Alma Lopez's screenprint *La Llorona Desperately Seeking Coyolxauhqui* (2003) is dedicated to the murders of women that and girls on the US-Mexico border. Over the last ten years, over 300 women and girls have been found tortured and murdered in Juarez, Mexico. In the poster, the most prominent figure is a young girl crying with a background in complete pink, symbolic of the black crosses on pink background painted by family and friends to represent the missing young women. La Llorona is depicted in the silhouette behind her, the Virgin is less prominently there in the background design of the dress, and Coatlicue also appears in her necklace. The young girl with Coyolxauhqui tattooed on her chest represents the missing daughters, while the roses in the foreground are symbolic of an offering on an altar to them. Lopez uses the classic story of La Llorona looking for her children to speak of all the missing daughters that have died due to this violence at the border against women and girls (Blake 2008).

Lopez has a very similarly named piece that was the cover to Alicia Gaspar de Alba's collection *La Llorona on the Longfellow Bridge: Poetry y otras movidas.* It is titled *La Llorona Desperately Seeking Coyolxauhqui in Juarez* (2003) with a young woman in a tattered cloak floating above the water of the Rio Grande searching for murdered young women. It is unclear if she is a ghost due to her tattered cloak and ethereal appearance, or if she is a victim who got away. In the

background there is a bridge from Mexico to the United States as well as a woman walking across the river on top of the submerged stone sculpture of the dismembered body of Coyolxauhqui. The girl floating above appears to will the sculpture to life and "re-members Coyolxauhqui as she remembers other Juárez women like herself (Blake 2008, 54)." In Lopez's work, Coyolxauhqui symbolizes all the young brown women that have been exploited by the NAFTA-enforced border economy of *maquiladoras* and the pornography and prostitution rings there. La Llorona symbolizes the suffering women have experienced due to the sexist and racist social order of late capitalism, especially on the border where risks are raised and violence becomes inevitable (Blake 2008). These select pieces are just a few that Chicana artists have used to make violence against women visible, and counter the stereotypes of women that make that violence possible (Blake 2008; Barraza 2001; Gaspar de Alba 1998; Perez 2007).

Chicana lesbians speak out!

Chicana lesbians began to emerge out of the Chicana movement for self realization, and increasingly out of the closet as the Gay Rights Movement appeared on the scene with confrontations such as the Stone Wall Rebellion of 1969. The Chicana lesbian artist critique emerged at the same time as the critique of *machismo* in the movement, and also gained prominence in the 1980s and beyond. Chicana lesbians postulated that their presence was the least congruent with Chicano nationalism, because it not only questioned many of the Loyalist Chicano cultural values, but also Mexican Catholic rules on the traditional family (Trujillo 1997). One of the first derisions Chicanas received when they started organizing around women's issues was that they were "lesbians" and "outsiders." Lesbians appear in Chicano literature most frequently by their complete omission, including the famous poem *Yo Soy Joaquin* where Joaquin always speaks in the first person, but whenever a woman is referred to, she is always in the passive third person in relation to him. Inside this narrative, "the Mexican woman is defined through her love for the male hero…thus

she exists only through the heterosexual family romance (Esquibel 2006, 147)." Chicana lesbians were threatening because they could easily shape a world where men perceived that they were not even necessary. However, Chicana lesbian writer Cherríe Moraga attempted to envision a new queer Chican@ nationalism that "decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth…, in which la Chicana Indígena stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day (Esquibel 2006, 148)." Chicana artists used many new depictions of classic and new icons to envision this new queer nationalism and challenge the homophobia inside and outside the movement (Esquibel 2006; Moraga & Anzaldua 1983).

Alma Lopez challenges Chicana heterosexuality and reinvents La Virgen in her print on canvas *Lupe & Sirena in Love* (1999). In this piece, two Mexican national icons, the *sirena* or mermaid from popular culture and La Virgen de Guadalupe are embracing one another, with La Virgen gripping the breast and holding the rear of *Sirena* in the backdrop of the L.A. skyline and the border wall. Cherubs frame the piece, while there are faint depictions of the police chasing an indiscriminate person on a dirt road. This piece is simultaneously "symbolically claiming visibility for lesbian desire within national popular culture and religious cultures" while critiquing policing of gender, sexuality and race on the U.S./Mexico border (Perez 2007, 176)." She uses another piece, a digital print called *Ixta* (1999) to challenge the typical Chicano iconography of the Romeo-Juliet type story of Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl, where the father of princess Ixtacihuatl sends Aztec warrior Popocatepetl to the front lines in order to win his daughter's hand in marriage. Her father tells her that he died at war, and she kills herself in grief. The classic image Chicanos have used in murals and posters all over the country is one of Popocatepetl holding the limp body of Ixtacihuatl as he mourns. Lopez refashions this to show a young Latina grieving over the body of another Latina strewn over a graffiti-covered inner-city wall at the U.S./Mexico border. In this piece, lesbian love is deliberately shown as "illicit" and "illegal" with no safe space and homeland,

regardless of which side of the border one is on (Perez 2007).

In Ester Hernandez's silkscreen *La Ofrenda* (1988) you see the bare back of a young woman with a short Mohawk, and her back is elaborately tattooed with La Virgen de Guadalupe in classic *cholo* fashion. A small feminine hand is seen holding up a rose to her back as an offering at the altar of the Virgin, both an intimately sexual and religious moment. In this piece, Hernandez is challenging our notion of the body as a landscape and homeland, where for women, lesbians and gay men, "land is that physical mass called our bodies…[that] remain under occupation by an Anglo-centric, patriarchal, imperialist United States (Moraga 1993, 173)." This is a very intimate moment of love and spirituality that counters both the invisibility of lesbianism inside the Chicana/o movement, but utilizes the sacredness of the Virgin to give it credence and respect. Chicana artists have been central to challenging stereotypes of their gender, sexuality and heritage. Through the use of these powerful religious and popular culture icons, they are able to place their experience on the map of the border, both literally and figuratively. Chicana art has been on the ascendancy since the 1980s, and has yet to reach its peak.

Forty Years Later: Chicana Artists Redefined

As Chicana art became predominant in the 1980s and 1990s, Chicana writers and theorists had to develop an understanding of their hybrid experience and also how they expressed that in particular mediums of aesthetics. Two main theories developed during this time: Gloria Anzaldua's *nepantla*, or the premise that Chicanas represent a state of hybridity between cultures, national borders, gender roles and sexuality; and then Amalia Mesa-Bains aesthetic theory of *domesticana*, which was an explanation for Chicana artists' employment of domestic material in their work in conversation with Ybarra-Frausto's *rasquachismo*. While these two theories did not exactly speak to one another directly, both were already being exhibited in Chicana art. Elaborating on the two

theories and how they have been exhibited in the art speaks to the main concepts that these artists deal with today. Finally, reflecting on how the Chicana artists interact with the Mexican American community today, with its old and new challenges, might better explain new strategies and alliances that Chicana artists are forming across race, gender and sexuality today. This is most prominently exhibited in some Chicana artists' subsequent rejection of "identity politics" in the context of the 21st century, elaborated on in This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation edited by Gloria Anzaluda and Analouise Keating (Anzaldua 2007; Anzaldua & Keating 2002; Maciel and Ortiz 1996; Mesa Bains 2003).

Nepantla

Nepantla is a Nahuatl term that refers to a place in *the middle* or *in between* which Chicana artists and scholars have used to encompass "resistance strategies of survival." It often involves a process of *transculturation*, which in "many ways is resisting the mainstream, while, reinterpreting and redefining cultural difference as a place of power."[9] The term doves perfectly with the idea of *la mestiza* who is a woman of Black, European and Indian[10] heritage. *Nepantla*, in essence, is a state of being at the crossroads, and in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and national borders, the Chicana is a perfect representation of this. As conveyed in This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color:

> We are the queer groups, the people that don't belong anywhere, not in the dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. Combined we cover so many oppressions…In El Mundo Zurdo I with my own affinities and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet (Moraga and Anzaldua 1981, 209).

The "new middle" of Nepantla is a politicized state due to experiences of colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalism. It is also a state that can bridge various outsider identities in

[9] www.chicanoart.org/nepantla.html

[10] Often in Mexican scholarship, indigenous people are still referred to as "Indian." See Bonfil Batalla (1996).

order to bring the margins together under one banner. It is never a position without contradiction or conflict, but always a source of bridging the gaps.

According to Gloria Anzaldua, *la Coatlicue* State is an essential prelude to this crossing. This State is simultaneously subliminal, spiritual and creative. For her, "*la Coatlicue* is one of the powerful images, or 'archetypes,' that inhabits, or passes through my psyche…*la Coatlicue* is the consuming internal whirlwind, the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche;…[she] is the mountain, the Earth Mother who conceived all celestial beings out of her cavernous womb. Goddess of birth and death, *Coatlicue* gives and takes away life; she is the incarnation of cosmic processes (Anzaldua 2007, 68)." She not only reclaims her Aztec roots, but a goddess that is thought to be older than the Aztec empire itself. In doing so, she openly rejects the formation of a class society that divided Mesoamericans amongst themselves, an essential reason the Spanish conquest succeeded. The concept of *Nepantla* was adopted by many Chicana artists to express their positionality, their political voice and their spiritual wisdom. While some works directly identified with the concept in their titles, others emphasized hybridity and crossroads in their content, their creative process supposedly inspired by *la Coatlicue* State (Anzaldua 2007; Moraga and Anzaldua 1981).

One artistic example of this is Chicana artist Alma Lopez's digital print titled *California Fashions Slaves* (1997) in the reclaiming of the previous generation of Mexican-American and Mexican women (possibly their literal mothers), many of whom worked in the back-breaking and underpaid positions in the sweatshop industry of Los Angeles. The symbols here point to the southwestern United States today, which was once part of Northern Mexico before the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848, at the end of the Mexican American War. As Laura Perez details the Virgin "may be appearing to the pursued undocumented laborer because, like the recently canonized Juan Diego to whom she originally appeared, he is *un inocente*, innocent, though he is pursued like a

criminal for not having proper immigration papers (Perez 2007, 169)." The irony of this once being past Mexican land in which now Mexican labor is being exploited is impossible to ignore. The "Manifest Destiny" arrow pointing to the Virgen could either further implicate Anglo-American colonialist mentality and expansion, or instead imply a different destiny for Chicanas to reclaim the land usurped from them. The faded Aztec statue appears as a rising sun, with the ancestor's face pointed towards the heavens. This piece in particular takes on issues of hidden histories, land rights, racism, sexism, exploitation and an imagined future of a resurging Mexica empire. Its emphasis of border crossings makes it parallel the writings of Anzaldua on the middle condition of *nepantla* (Anzaldua 2007; Perez 2007).

As a final example, Chicana artist Yreina D. Cervantez made a triptych of lithographs titled *Nepantla* (1995), *Mi Nepantla* (1995), and *Beyond Nepantla* (1995). These pieces express their hybridity even in their medium, because lithographs "enact a visual cultural nepantlism as they hover between the Christian triptych and the pre-Colombian and colonial-era codex, referred to by the parchment-colored paper and the pictographic composition of the prints (Perez 2007, 44)." Her first lithograph, *Nepantla*, counters the ongoing struggle between the Western scientific perspective and American Indian worldviews. With newspaper clippings from Pete Wilson's anti-immigration politics, along with pictures of humanoid skeletons on all fours, she references racialist evolutionary discourses and uneven development amongst cultures. She also includes the Nahua glyph of *ollin*, signifying continuous change and balanced differences. In *Mi Nepantla*, the most forthcoming aspect of the work is a digitized photograph of herself with her eyes closed in meditation, with glyphs of her cheeks of Coyolxauhqui, speaking to her own fragmentation as an artist at the crossroads. In *Beyond Nepantla*, she uses the dark spiral of the feathered serpent, the glyph of Quetzalcoátl, to represent the unity of the spiritual and the material. To connect the three pieces she includes an additional sketched self-portrait in every lithograph, holding a sprig of sage and

positioned near a feather. This series layers our meaning and perception through utilizing signifying systems of different cultures, "hybridizing or broadening dominant cultural and visual politics under the glyph of balanced dualities and change (Perez 2007, 45)." When reading many Chicana artists work since Moraga and Anzaldua's world shaking book on third wave feminism, symbolic references to *Nepantla* are common place (Anzaldua 2007; Barraza 2001; Gaspar de Alba 1998; Perez 2007).

Domesticana

While Moraga and Anzaldua were formulating an inclusive third wave feminism, where women of color found voices in response to white patriarchal capitalist oppression, artist and writer Amalia Mesa-Bains began to make sense of the new mediums that Chicana artists were claiming as their own. These new predominant mediums left the space of the mural and poster, and instead utilized mixed media reminiscent of home altars, yard shrines (*capillas)*, *ex-votos*, traditional garments of various historical periods, quilts, sewing boxes, and even dresser drawers. Mesa-Bains was inspired to define these mediums as specific to Chicana heritage, *domesticana*. This term was framed in conversation with Ybarra-Frausto's *rasquache.*

Tomas Ybarra-Frausto coined the term *rasquachismo* to define Chicano artists' use of seemingly ephemeral material such as old tires, broken plates, plastic containers and more in their mixed media. He argued that writers such as Celeste Olalquiaga mistook these pieces as *kitsch*, a term signifying objects as vernacular, vulgar, inferior, tasteless, and insensible. Kitsch was created under the economic conditions that cause the purchase of cheap, mass-produced objects that then replace genuine folk art and is a sign of modernization in Third World countries. Instead, Ybarra-Frausto countered that the condition of poor and working-class Chicanos was one of always making do with what little one had, and using items that are seen as expendable by richer and whiter populations to craft something new, much like being practically creative in order to survive (Ybarra-

Frausto 1991). *Rasquachismo* then becomes for Chicano artists and intellectuals a vehicle for both culture and identity. This dual function of resistance and affirmation are essential to the sensibility of Rasquachismo. Rasquachismo is an integral worldview, which serves as a basis for cultural identity and sociopolitical practice. Therefore, it meant "operating as an internally colonized community within the borders of the United States, Chicanos forged a new cultural vocabulary composed of sustaining elements of Mexican tradition and lived encounters in a hostile environment (Mesa-Bains 2003, 301)." This critique of *kitsch* was located in Chicano/a working-class experience with definable cultural roots (Gaspar de Alba 1998; Mesa-Bains 2003; Ybarra-Frausto 1991; 1993).

Mesa-Bains applied the working class and cultural nature of *rasquache* to conditions of working-class Chicanas, stating that their traditional experience has been more focused on the domestic sphere. In this arena, Mexican and Mexican-American women have maintained their own creative expressions, through altars, religious *retablos*, garments that they often sewed themselves, and other small enclosed spaces of originality and resourcefulness. Chicana artists began to utilize this underdog strategy adopted by their mothers and grandmothers to express positive affirmations of cultural heritage, while exposing deeper meanings of domestic tensions and violence. Characteristics of domesticana include an emphasis on ephemeral, site-specific works, and this emphasis arises from Chicana survivalist responses to the dilemmas of migration, dislocation, and the impermanence of community celebrations. The extension of these forms through domesticana serves as a retrieval of memory, capturing in permanent imagery the remembrance of things past. For Mesa-Bains, the critical to the strategy of domesticana is the quality of paradox. Purity and debasement, beauty and resistance, devotion and emancipation are aspects of the paradoxical that activate Chicana domesticana as feminist intervention (Mesa Bains 2003; Perez 2007).

Santa Barraza's *Renacimiento/Rebirth* (1980) painted in gold leaf on paper has the strong

narrative quality that is common of Mexican folk *retablos*. Retablos are usually small votives, ex-votos or devotional paintings that are commonly made by Catholic people throughout Latin and Central American to visually reflect a blessing or miracle that occurred in their lives due to a saint's intervention (Brenner 2002). They are usually very small and often painted on thin rectangular metal sheets. Barraza's piece depicts a very dark and ominous Virgen that has a skull around her neck. She is watching over a mother mourning the death of her baby while nature regenerates with an aloe vera plant growing out of the burial site. The crib as a tomb marker for the little *angelito/a* is a funerary practice very particular to the Southwest, where Barraza grew up. Barraza pulls on her upbringing in Kingston, Texas with the use of the *retablo* and the crib tomb marker. In this piece, the Virgen not only represents regeneration and redemption, but she also symbolizes the death that is a necessary step in that process. The mother crying at the crib/grave represents the particular experience of losing a child in or shortly after childbirth. Here Barraza is not only using an artistic medium that pulls from Catholic folk art common in Mexico and the United States, but she depicts one of the Virgin in a much more radical way as both provider of life and death (Barraza 2001).

Yolanda Lopez makes an interesting contribution to *domesticana* in her installation *The Nanny* (1994) from the *Women's Work Is Never Done* series. This installation is of a nanny or maid's uniform hanging from a white wooden changing screen, though it also appears to be suspended in space much like the dress on a clothesline in Frida Kahlo's famous painting *My Dress Hangs Here* (1933). On either side of the changing screen are posters, one of a wool advertisement with a smiling white woman model, and on the other an enlarged *National Geographic* advertisement for travel to Mexico where an indigenous woman dutifully hands fruit to a much taller and prominent white woman who is smiling. In front of the changing screen is a floorboard with a load of laundry and cleaning supplies. This piece is effective in critiquing second-wave Anglo middle-class feminism, where it is demonstrated how Mexican American women are always

perceived as servants to white women. The dress emphasizes that not only do Mexican and Mexican American women clean white women's homes, but they also clean when they get home. The dress is tailored in such a way as to imply that is may have been sewn by the absent *mestiza* woman. Here, Lopez is utilizing *domesticana* garments and laundry baskets to critique Chicanas place in the second-wave feminist movement, and in their own spheres at home as those who work a double shift for the white woman boss during the day and the *jefe* at home as well (Perez 2007).

Bridging with new allies in the face of uncertain futures

New realities for people that self-identify as Chicano/a, Mexican-American or Hispanic have become ever prominent in the 21st century. The Mexican-origin and Mexican American community has been rapidly growing according to statistical data, with half of its growth from immigration and half from childbirth since 1980 (Maciel and Ortiz 1996). Increasingly cities like New York City show that those now classified as Latinos, of those of Latin American and South American descent, have taken over the position of the second largest ethno-racial group, and in some areas it is approaching or has achieved majority status (Davis 2000). While Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants have been grouped into the Latino classification for purposes of political unity and occasional common interest, they still make up the overwhelming majority of this group throughout the Southwest and in new locations like the Pacific Northwest and the American South (Davis 2000; Rodriguez 2007). Health wise Latinos seem to be receiving less access to health care and pre-natal care than any other major ethnic group, but they also appear less likely to die of chronic diseases such as heart disease (men) and cancer or heart disease (women) than their white counterparts.

Mexican American and Mexican-origin families are still larger, on average, than non-Hispanic white families and "somewhat more likely to be headed by women (Maciel and Ortiz 1996, 10)." Those Mexican-American or Mexican-origin women who have achieved education

beyond high school are likely to have smaller families than their less formally educated counterparts. In education, less than half of Mexican-origin persons aged 25 years and over had completed four years of high school or more, "compared with 80 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 61 percent of Cubans and 58 percent of Puerto Ricans" (Maciel and Ortiz 1996, 11). While more Chicanos and Chicanas were in the labor force than ever before, with Chicanas topping the 50 percent mark for participation, it did not translate into high occupational or income achievement relative to other groups. Also, despite "considerable work effort, Chicanos are at high risk for experiencing poverty in their lifetimes (Maciel and Ortiz 1996)." Regardless, all observers from the most critical of diversity to the most accepting acknowledge that the Mexican American and Mexican-origin population cannot be ignored with their growing population in relation to other ethnicities and their representation in the US labor force (Davis 2000; Maciel and Ortiz 1996; Rodriguez 2007).

Meanwhile, some Chicana artists have achieved some degree of success, especially while holding another position inside the academy, while others have had to quit their work in response to underfunding and ongoing structural inequalities. Those that have been able to achieve a middle class status in the academy have often maintained the ongoing battle in research, legal avenues and political activism to support their community and the growing population of Mexican migrants. This has created a strange alignment of middle-class academic intellectuals, entrepreneurs and politicians with some weight, in contrast to the majority of Mexican-Americans and Mexican-origin people stuck in impoverished and racially divided neighborhoods. How have Chicana artists, particularly of the third-wave feminist variety attempted to address these new advantages and ongoing challenges? Their continued production of innovative and politically visionary work has had some effect, but the failures of the Chicano/a movement of the 1960s and 1970s to take political power has left many of the structural inequalities intact. In addition, the major wars, economic and

environmental crises of this century have placed new demands on activists, artists and political visionaries.

While This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color was a definitive work uniting women of color in their critique of white Anglo feminists and patriarchy, it chose to emphasize only those voices that had been the most neglected in US society. While in the early 1980s, this made a lot of political sense, and enabled Chicana artists and writers, along with other prominent women of color, to carve out a space for themselves, it at times created an ongoing barrier of building bridges beyond that community. As times shifted towards needs of a growing population of Mexican-Americans and Mexican-origin people with longer protracted periods of little to no prominent activism, Chicana activists and artists started a dialogue about reassessing the form of "identity politics" they had become caught up in. As a beginning gesture to include new voices, Gloria Anzaldua and Analouise Keating intentionally included many more South Asian women, transgendered people, and some "white" women and men allies in their new anthology This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation. They did this knowing they would receive critique from many of their colleagues that identified with the feminist third wave, but they risked it in an effort to build bridges. As Anzaldua explains:

> Staying "home" and not venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth. To bridge means loosening our borders, not closing off to others. Bridging is the work of opening the gate to the stranger, within and without. To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safely because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded. Effective bridging comes from knowing when to close ranks to those outside our home, group, community, nation – and when to keep the gates open. (Anzaldua and Keating 2002, 3)

In the 21st century, new alignments of political, cultural and racial groups becomes increasingly possible and contradictorily difficult with the strongly disorienting postmodernist

interpretations of our age. Chicana artists have been deploying a form of iconography, which Frederic Jameson argues must have the ability to realign iconic symbols into a form of symbolic mapping that can give us the ability to find ourselves through this postmodern cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson 1984). While postmodernism has made efforts to fragment our modern subjectivity, works like This Bridge We Call Home attempt to reconfigure our subjects through bridging. Chicana artists are significantly positioned as those that exist at many of the crossroads at which a bridge is needed, and through their art they can continue to create these political visions pointing towards a new world. Anzaldua imparts that "for *nepantleras*, to bridge is an act of will, an act of love, an attempt toward compassion and reconciliation, and a promise to be present with the pain of others without losing themselves to it (Anzaldua and Keating 2002, 4)." This act of compassionate bridging, and creating new political alliances, becomes increasingly essential in the face of major political, economic and environmental crises that plague our time. This political and bridging art will only be successful if it "ensure[s], at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perpetual shock, caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification (Ranciere 2006, 63)." Chicana artists have already achieved this readability and shock in their works, but it has yet to be seen if they will build larger, wider, and longer bridges to encompass a new generation searching for a political map.

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